Theories of Mind and Soul: Plato to Hume

Description:
This course explores theories of mind and their relation with the problematic and contested notions of soul in Western philosophy from antiquity to empiricism. Does the empiricist account of the senses, imagination, and cognition effectively diminish the soul and enspirited worlds? Or is spirit uncomfortably present and lodged in these theories, ready to be reclaimed? Because modern ideas of soul and spirit are informed by ancient Greek philosophy and Christian theology, we will begin with the foundational texts of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas. Then, we will trace the modern turn to consciousness, mind, and personal identity. In addition to the primary texts, we will read select contemporary theorists on the philosophers. This course emphasizes close reading of philosophical texts: our primary goal is to analyze each reading with attention to its central claims, logic or method, and its implications.

Texts:
Copies of most texts will be scanned and/or photocopied for your use. They will be available through Dropbox. A free account is necessary for access. **Students must print the readings and bring to class. No laptops allowed in class.**

Schedule

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>Introduction; early Greek ideas of soul</td>
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<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Meno</em>, and selection from <em>Phaedrus</em></td>
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<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>De Anima</em>: i 1-4; ii 1-12</td>
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<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>Aristotle <em>De Anima</em>: iii 1-5, 10-13</td>
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<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>Aquinas, <em>Summa Theologica</em> Questions 73-88</td>
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<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>Locke, from <em>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</em> Book II, Chapters 1 and 27</td>
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<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>Locke cont’d; Etienne Balibar from <em>Identity and Difference: John Locke and the Invention of Consciousness</em></td>
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Nov 18  Gilles Deleuze, from *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume’s Theory of Human Nature*

Nov 25  Hume, “Of the Immortality of the Soul;” Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*

Dec 2   Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*

Dec 9  Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*: [1st ed. 1781, 2nd ed. 1787], Introduction; Transcendental Aesthetic

FINAL ESSAY DUE: January 2, 2016

**Work**

The readings are relatively short but very dense, so please read them once slowly or preferably twice, before class. This year I will be introducing a new pedagogical component to the course consisting of short (5-10 minutes) training and practice sessions in contemplative meditation techniques. This practice will complement and further our study of consciousness and identity.

1.) Oral presentation of a reading. 20% of final grade. The aim is for you to present an analysis of some aspect of the text rather than summarize the whole. You will be evaluated on content and on clarity of presentation. Plan to speak in class for no more than 15 minutes.

You should have something approaching a thesis to which others can respond. You may want to include:

- Statement of the author’s argument and your idea about it;
- Justification for your idea (Why point out this particular issue?)
- Analysis of a crucial passage, not only to demonstrate your point, but also tease out the implicit assumptions and implications of the text;
- Comparison of the theory under consideration to other course readings (Please avoid historical or biographical context for this exercise.)

2.) Weekly oral participation and meditation journal (the journal will not submitted to the instructor).

3.) Designated respondent for another student’s presentation (once only). This response and your weekly participation will make up 15% of the final grade. As the designated respondent you may do any number of things: ask for clarification based on your own understanding of the reading; present a similar or alternative reading of the text; draw us to another aspect of the reading that develops the presenter’s reading; formulate a question for discussion. You will **not** have a copy of the student’s presentation prior to your response.
4.) Essay: approx 15-18 pages. 65% of the final grade. Any topic and approach, but must focus on the course readings. Please see me to discuss your topic by November 25th. Style and documentation: MLA Bibliography style or Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition.

Late papers will be penalized except in extenuating circumstances. An Incomplete can only be granted on medical or compassionate grounds, and must be arranged at least two weeks before the end of the term.

Absences are unacceptable except in extenuating circumstances.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence in the Academic Handbook:
http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf