REQUIRED TEXTS:

Selected Readings Booklet

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS: (subject to change)

Th. A. 28  Introduction to the Course

I. Plato’s Republic

Why be Just? (*Republic*, Bk. II - 174-185)

Th. S. 4  Justice in the City (*Republic*, Finish Bk. II)
Justice in the Soul (*Republic*, Bk. IV)

T. S. 9  Philosophers Should Rule (*Republic*, Bk. V)

Th. S. 11  The Idea of the Good (*Republic*, Bk. VI and VII, 365-375)

II. Descartes’ Meditations

T. S. 16  A Method for Reason (Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, parts 1-2)
The Thinking Self and Certainty (First and Second *Meditations*)

Th. S. 18  The Criterion of Clarity and Distinctness and the Existence of God (Third *Meditation*)

T. S. 23  The Existence of the World and the Distinction between Mind and Body (Sixth *Meditation*)

Th. S. 25  Exam on Plato’s *Republic* and Descartes’ *Discourse* and *Meditations*

III. Flanagan’s The Problem of the Soul

T. S. 30  The Humanistic and Scientific Images (Flanagan, *Problem of the Soul*, “Preface”)

Th. O. 2  The Human Animal (*Problem of the Soul*, Ch. 1)
Paper #1 Due

T. O. 7  Varieties of Conciliation between the Scientific and Humanistic Images (*Problem of the
Soul, Ch. 2, pp. 47-55)
The Mind (Problem of the Soul, Ch. 3 pp. 57-74)

Th. O. 9 - F. O. 10  **Fall Break**
T. O. 14  Physicalism, Determinism, and Subjective Realism (Problem of the Soul, Ch. 3, pp. 74-98)
Th. O. 16  Free Will (Problem of the Soul, Ch. 4 pp. 99-119)
T. O. 21  Indeterminism (Problem of the Soul, Ch. 4 119-136)
Th. O. 23  Moral Agency (Problem of the Soul, Ch. 4 pp. 136-159)
T. O. 28  Exam on Flanagan’s The Problem of the Soul

IV. John Cottingham, On the Meaning of Life and Ronald Aronson, “Gratitude”
Th. O. 30  Science, the Meaning and the Meanings of Life (Meaning of Life, Ch. 1, pp. 1-23)
T. N. 4  Morality and the Meaning of Life (Meaning of Life, Ch. 1, pp. 23-3  
The Naturalistic Challenge to Meaning (Meaning of Life, Ch. 2, pp. 32-49)
Th. N. 5  Darwinism and the Problem of Evil (Meaning of Life, Ch. 2, pp. 49-63, Ch. 3, pp. 63-66)
T. N. 11  The Frailty of Goodness (Meaning of Life, Ch. 3, pp. 66-79)
Th. N. 13  Religious Faith and Gratitude (Meaning of Life, Ch. 3, pp. 79-104 and Aronson’s “Gratitude” - Selected Readings Booklet)

V. Belief and Evidence
T. N. 18  Is it Right to Believe without Evidence? (Clifford’s “The Ethics of Belief” & James’ “The Will to Believe” 1-2 - To Be Distributed)
Th. N. 20  Is it Right to Believe without Evidence? (“The Will to Believe” 2-10)
T. N. 25  Is it Right to Believe without Evidence? (Finish “The Will to Believe)”  
Can We Will to Believe? (Williams’ “Deciding to Believe” 136-137 - Selected Readings Booklet)

W. N. 26 - F. N. 28  **Thanksgiving Break**
T. D. 2  Can We Will to Believe? Can Faith take the form of Hope rather than Belief? (Finish Discussing William’s “Deciding to Believe” and read Pojman’s “Faith as Hope” - to be distributed)

M. D. 8 (9 a.m.)  Paper #2 Due - My Office
W. D. 10 (1 p.m.)  Exam on Cottingham, Aronson, Clifford, James, and Williams.

COURSE GOALS:
You will learn how to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical arguments presented in different texts by different authors. This will principally require you to develop a capacity to attend to the formal elements of those arguments that make a difference with respect to their validity. But it will also require you to be sensitive to different textual modes of expression and how that can affect the substantive content of the arguments being considered.

More specifically, you will learn to think critically about arguments concerning 1) why we should be just, 2) the nature and limits of human knowledge, 3) the nature of the mind, 3) free will, 4) the meaning of life, 5) and the relation between belief and evidence.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Attendance: Read all assigned texts and attend class. If you need to miss a class you should discuss it with me ahead of time. Excessive absence will be taken into account in your grade.

2) Exams: There will be three exams, the first two on the preliminary dates scheduled on the course syllabus (which if changed will be announced in class) and the last on the date scheduled for the Final Exam for this class. You are required to take these on the dates scheduled. They will each be worth 15% of your final grade.

3) Quizzes. There will be several very short quizzes on the readings given randomly throughout the course at the beginning of class. These quizzes will be designed simply to determine if you are doing the readings. As such, I will typically ask one very factual question about the text, something I believe anyone should have been able to get from their reading (in other words, nothing involving a careful understanding of difficult ideas - that’s the sort of thing we’ll be working through in class).

All together, the quizzes will count toward 15% of your grade. Everyone will start with a grade of 100 and retain that grade for each question correctly answered or lose 10 points for each question incorrectly answered (or missed because of absence or tardiness the day the quiz was given). I will, however, allow you to write a 4 page summary of the readings for class on a day in which you may have missed a quiz (either by incorrectly answering it or absence or tardiness) for any reason that will enable you to redeem the 10 lost points for two quizzes. In addition to this, you are always welcome to make up any quiz missed because of absence due to illness or some sort of personal emergency in the same manner. In order to redeem a missed quiz, the summary should be turned in by the next class period or, if this should be impossible (due to illness, perhaps) at the earliest possible time to be arranged with me. But, in the latter case, such arrangements should be made with me as soon as possible after the missed quiz, at the latest by the day of your return to class (in the case of absence due to illness).

4) Reflection Papers. You will write two papers reflecting on the readings we have discussed in class, one on some issue of interest to you emerging from our readings of Plato or Descartes, the other on some issue of interest emerging from our readings of either Flanagan, Cottingham, Aronson, Clifford, James, Williams, or Pojman. Each of your papers will be worth 20% unless the grade of your second paper is better than the grade of the first, in which case I will weight the first paper 10% and the second 30%.

Each paper should be at least 5 full pages in length. Each should deal with what you believe to be the most significant or interesting issue or related set of issues emerging from our readings, drawing your own conclusions regarding the issue(s) examined (either supportive or critical of the author’s conclusions) and presenting your reasoning for your conclusions. My major criteria for grading the papers will be 1) how well your paper reflects an accurate understanding of the text(s) you are dealing with and 2) how well you support your conclusions with reasons, either your own or those provided in the readings. In evaluating your reasoning I will be particularly looking for whether you address yourself to all of the relevant considerations that have been raised by the readings, lecture and class discussion.
General Expectations for the Reflection Papers. The paper should be expository and critical. The expository dimension of your paper should present and clarify the claim(s) made by the author(s) with which you are dealing and, especially, her/his arguments for that claim(s). The critical dimension of your paper should move beyond presenting the claims others have made to responding to those claims, by critically evaluating the validity of the arguments made for that claim. In the critical dimension of your essay you should be assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the claims you are considering, with an eye toward formulating what you believe is the most reasonable position to take onto your issue. What you should be working toward is 1) the formulation of your own position with respect to the issues you deal with in your paper and 2) a defense of that position on the basis of your critical assessment of the author's arguments for the claims s/he makes on that issue. Your own position should, in other words, emerge as an implication of your critical assessment of the author's work. It should not emerge from thin air without justification. The point of a critical essay is to convince other people of your position on a topic. And the only way you can do that is by showing how it responds to the strengths and weaknesses of other positions that have been adopted by building on their strengths and overcoming their weaknesses.

It is also worth noting that you need not disagree with the author(s) you are considering in your essay. But even if you agree with your author, you should not simply reproduce her/his work on an issue. There are always weaknesses to an author's work that need to be considered even if you are otherwise in complete agreement with an author's position. Conversely, if you disagree with your author there are always strengths to an author's work that need to be considered and taken into account in your own contrasting position. The best papers will provide a balanced critical consideration of both the strengths and weaknesses of an author’s position.

Hints in Writing your Paper: An essay in philosophy is not that different from any other sort of essay, except you deal primarily with ideas and arguments rather than facts, characters, or plots. Rules which apply to writing any other essay apply here as well. For example,

1) When presenting your position, remember that no one is interested in what you think for its own sake. Your reader wants to know why we should accept your position as an implication of your evaluation of the position of your author. In other words, your essay should not be divided into two parts - 1) What the author believes and 2) What you believe - with no real connection between the two except, perhaps, that they both refer to the same issue. Your position should emerge as a reasoned response to the strengths and weaknesses of the claims and arguments of your author.

2) Document all references to your author's work with appropriate citations. Whenever you attribute a distinct claim or position to an author you should provide a citation to substantiate that reference. And citations should be specific, giving the specific page numbers in a text where the author’s elaboration of the position in question can be found. Quotations will also enhance your essay by allowing you to more accurately present your author's position on an issue. But your paper should be more than just a string of quotations. The essay should present your understanding (in your own words) of your author's positions, with quotations used only to illustrate and enhance the positions to which you are referring.

3) Make sure your writing style is clear. Don't introduce ideas without elaboration. Make sure your sentences make sense. Proofread your paper before handing it in.

Technical Specifications for your Paper: Your papers should be typewritten, double-spaced, using a standard sized font, allowing you to get 23 lines of text per page. Your margins are to be no more than 1 inch, top, bottom and sides. You are to place your name and title of the paper on a separate title page that is not counted in the length of the paper. You are to use endnotes for any substantial notes (beyond very brief bibliographical citations for quotations which may be in the body of the text) that are also not to be counted in the length of the paper. Citations may be of any form as long as they are clear enough to easily lead the reader to the source of the citation. You should refrain from using headers or footers unless you can use them and still get at least 23 lines of text per page.
Guidelines for Internet Research: Although research beyond what we have read is not required for any of your three papers, you may want to do some additional research. If you do research on the internet it is very important to remember that anyone can publish anything at all on the internet. As such, the most prudent attitude to take toward the documents you find there is to assume they are worthless unless you have good reason to believe otherwise. For this class, there are two types of acceptable literature to use in writing your papers that you may be able to find on the internet: 1) a document that is merely an electronic version of an article published in a scholarly publication such as an academic journal. In this case, you should provide a citation to the textual publication just as you would if you had found it in the library. If the web version does not provide page numbers which correspond with the original text enabling you to cite specific pages, you should find the original text in the library or through inter-library loan. 2) Documents that have been posted by someone with expertise in the topic of the document. Say, for example, you find an essay on a topic of interest that has been posted by a scholar teaching at a University. It should be a relatively easy matter to document the author’s position at her/his institution and, in this way, document her/his expertise in the matter. Any citation of an internet reference that is not an electronic duplication of an article which has already appeared in a scholarly publication should have a brief list of the author’s credentials, sufficient to document her/his expertise in the matter. It might look something like this: “James Harrison, “Plato’s Republic,” http://www.harvard.edu/~jharrison/platojustice.pdf”. Harrison is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh. This is a paper he presented at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, December, 1998.”

A Warning about the use of “Secondary Texts”. There are no additional readings beyond what we have already read for the course that you are required to do in order to write these papers. But if you decide to use additional readings you should be careful in how you use “secondary texts.” A secondary text is any text which presents the claims and arguments of someone else, either with an eye toward helping us understand that author’s ideas better or as a prelude to a critical assessment of that author’s ideas. You should never, however, rely exclusively on what a secondary text says about someone’s ideas. You should always turn back to the author whose work is being discussed to verify that what the secondary text says is correct. In particular, you should never attribute a specific claim or argument to an author and then cite a secondary source as your only reference (though you may also want to cite a secondary author whose understanding of an argument or idea has helped you with the presentation of it you are making in your paper). Any ideas attributed to an author need to be documented with a reference to that author’s own work.

5) Course Grade: Your final course grade will be determined as follows: 15% for each exam, 15% for Quizzes and 20% for each paper (though if your second paper is a higher grade than your first, the first will count 10% of your final grade and the second 30% - this, of course, presupposes you wrote and turned in a first paper; only an actually written paper, actually turned in, can “earn” a grade). I use a 100 point scale for grades with 90-100 for As, 80-89 for Bs, 70-79 for Cs, 60-69 for Ds and 0-59 for F. Pluses and minuses (as in B+, B, B-) will be given in the following way: minuses for a score in the bottom 3 points for that grade (e.g., 80-82 = B-), an unqualified grade for a score in the middle 4 points for that grade (e.g., 83-86 = B), pluses for a score in the top 3 points for that grade (e.g., 87-89 = B+).

6) Turning in Assignments: All assignments are to be turned in personally by the student at the time it is due. Unless prior arrangements have been made I will not accept any assignments turned in by e-mail. If circumstances prevent you from turning in an assignment personally and e-mail is the only feasible way to do it, you must contact me ahead of time and seek permission to do so. If I approve, the student her/himself is responsible for insuring that I have received it. You can verify my receipt of your assignment by looking for a reply from me informing you that I have received it. You should save this reply to verify my receipt of the assignment in case there is any question about it. If you do not receive such a reply, I did not receive it and it is the student’s responsibility to determine what the problem is and rectify it. Any student who has not successfully turned in an assignment and when informed of this exclaims, “But I e-mailed that to you!” will be immediately placed in stocks and publically humiliated for using the high tech version of “the dog ate my homework” excuse (seriously, if I claim I didn’t get it and you don’t have a copy of my e-mail verifying receipt, then the assignment was never turned in and you will not receive any credit for it).
7) **Late or Missed Assignments:** All work should be done by the time and date specified in class or on the syllabus. I will not give unpenalized extensions except in the case of illness or some sort of personal emergency. To inquire about an unpenalized extension for these sorts of circumstances, you should speak with me ahead of the time the work is due or, in the case of emergencies, as soon as possible (if you have a wreck on the way to an exam, call me right after you call the police!). In the case of papers which are turned in late without an unpenalized extension, the grade will be penalized 10 points if it is turned in less than 1 day (to be precise, 24 hours) late, 10 more points if it is turned in more than 1 day but less than 2 days late, 10 more points if it is turned in more than 2 days but less than 3 days late, 10 more points if it is more than 3 days but less than 4 days late, 10 more points if it more than 4 days but less than 5 days late. A paper turned in more than 5 days late will receive a grade of zero. It is the student’s responsibility to make appropriate arrangements for turning in late papers. You should discuss your plans with me ASAP to make sure I approve of it. If you do not discuss your plans with me and, for instance, simply slip a late paper under the door of my office, I will count it as turned in on the date and time I find it in my office, not the date and time you turned it in. Exams must be taken at the time designated (unless, of course, you have received an unpenalized extension because of the sorts of circumstances mentioned above). There will be no opportunity to remake an exam that is missed without an unpenalized extension.

8) **Messages:** When I am not in my office, I can be contacted either by calling my office number and leaving me a message on the college’s voice mail system or by e-mailing me at shendley@bsc.edu. Though either way should enable me to get your message within a day, I would recommend e-mail as I’m more compulsive about checking it than my voice mail.

Though you are always welcome to leave a message for me on voice mail or e-mail, this should not be used as a substitute for contacting me personally regarding any problems that may arise with meeting your course responsibilities. I will always need to discuss these sorts of problems with you, personally, as soon as possible.

9) **Honor Code:** The honor code applies to all work done in this course. A violation of the honor code on any work done for this class will result in a grade of F for the course.