

Required Readings, Audios, and Videos

For Professor Dechene's Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 1301)

Spring 2011

Purchase the textbook either new, used, or in e-book format. Be sure to purchase the correct edition. The other readings are to be printed out by the student and brought to class at the appropriate time. Listen to audios on your home computer or in an ACC lab. Videos will be shown in class and will not be available elsewhere, since they are copyrighted materials.

A few of these items may not be required. Those that may not be required are so noted. Other required readings, audios, and videos may be added during the course.

Textbook:

1. Donald Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*, 5th edition (McGraw Hill Higher Education, 2010, ISBN 978-0-07-340748-7).
 - Be sure to purchase the fifth edition (blue cover).
 - This textbook may be available in e-book format (i.e., for Kindle, Nook, iPad, etc.)

Original Classic Readings and Audios:

2. [The Story of the Prodigal Son](#). This existential allegory is from the Bible (New Testament), and there is also a Buddhist version. It is about nondual philosophy and its implications for the lives of individuals. It states the theme of our course as a simple parable, and we will refer back to it often. It also illustrates how important allegories and myths can be in philosophy. 2 pages.
3. [Tao Te Ching](#) (*Dao Der Jing*) by Lao Tzu, Stephen Mitchell translation. I recommend that you print this in color as I have highlighted some of the most important passages to help you study the document. 17 pages plus Professor's one page study guide.
 - If you can read Chinese you may use a Chinese edition along with the standard class (Mitchell English translation) edition.
4. Florence Scovel Shinn, [chapter one of The Game of Life and How to Play It](#). This is highlighted to help you study it, so print it in color. The full book is [here](#).

It's one of the best examples of the American New Thought philosophy, and how to understand and use the principle called "naming" in poem 1 of *Tao Te Ching*. I recommend

you read the whole book, as its principles are of great usefulness in daily life—but only chapter one is required. This little book has been so popular with many of my students over the years that they purchased copies for their friends and family members. 4 pages, with a short recommended readings list on New Thought topics added at end. The full book prints out to about 30-40 pages, depending on the formatting you use.

5. [The Heart Sutra](#). Read it and [listen to it on the Web](#). This Mahayana Buddhist document is an excellent short expression of the nondual philosophy taught in our course. One page.
6. The first four chapters of [Ashtavakra Gita](#), Byrom translation. A very clear and helpful statement of the Advaita (i.e., nondualistic) Vedanta philosophy of Hinduism. 6 pages.
7. [Story of Uddalaka and Svetaketu](#) from the *Chandogya Upanishad*, chapter 6. Being (Sanskrit: *sat*), or the essence of reality itself, is there, but we can't see it and usually ignore it. "You are that" (Sanskrit: *Tat twam asi*). 3 pages.
8. [Bible, Psalm 82](#). Even the Bible understands that we are gods, and that the connection between reality and the illusory world is compassion, taking care of our brothers and sisters and nature. One page.
9. Plato's [Allegory of the Cave](#). One of the most famous stories ever told. It has many good and important ideas, but its ontology (philosophy of Being) is atrocious and irrational, and represents Western philosophy's decisive movement away from *wisdom* and into *speculation* (also called "theorymongering")—where it has largely remained for the last 2500 years. This degeneration of philosophy into mere speculation about the fundamental nature of reality (i.e., of "Being") started with Anaxagoras and was greatly reinforced by Plato and Aristotle. 3 pages of Plato, plus 3 pages of Professor's explanatory notes.
10. [John Locke on personal identity](#) (from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690). 8 pages. May not be required.
11. [Bishop Berkeley's thesis that reality consists of ideas](#), not of things outside our minds. Excerpted from Berkeley's *A Treatise on the Principles of Human Knowledge*, 1710. 5 pages.
12. [David Hume's proof that there is no such thing as a personal self](#). Excerpted from Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739. Plus an addendum by neuroscientist Sam Harris. 5 pages.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, [On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense](#) (1873). 8 pages.

Other Readings:

14. [Map of the Mediterranean Sea](#). See where Greek philosophy originated in the 6th and 5th centuries: western Turkey, southern Italy, and Athens. Not required, will be shown in class.

15. [Meditation: What is it? Why do it? How do you do it? What's it got to do with philosophy?](#) All wisdom teachings presuppose meditation, and stillness (meditation, incubation) is one of Parmenides' three requirements for "realization" of what is eternally true (the other two are longing for the truth and logic). 4 pages with link to *Open Heart Meditation* instructions by Prof. Dechene (1 page).
16. [Explanations of Some Terms and Concepts in Taoist \(Daoist\) Philosophy](#). This study guide will be used in the section on *Tao Te Ching*, and also when we discuss the Cynic philosophy when studying Hellenistic and Roman philosophies, and again when we discuss "the problem of dreams" when studying Descartes. 5 pages.
17. [Professor's lecture notes on Parmenides](#). You will need these to supplement our textbook sections on Parmenides and Zeno of Elia. 8 pages.

Videos:

18. Professor Malcolm Eckel's lecture on emptiness, nonduality, and the 2nd century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's doctrine of the Two Truths in Mahayana Buddhist philosophy. Professor Eckel, of Boston University, is the world expert on Mahayana nondualist philosophy, and this lecture explains both the theory and its implications for one's life. 30 minute video.
19. Lecture on the main teachings and significance of René Descartes by Professor Alan Charles Kors of the University of Pennsylvania. 30 minutes. May not be required.
20. Two lectures on the philosophy of John Locke and the implications and influence of Locke's ideas by Professor Kors. 60 minutes. May not be required.
21. Lecture on Nietzsche by Professor Lawrence Cahoon of the College of the Holy Cross. 30 minutes. May not be required.

Recommended, but Not Required:

22. [Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life](#). Professor Dechene's article on the American New Thought philosophy. It arose in New England in the latter part of the 19th century, and is very much alive and used by thousands of people today. It is an expression of what *Tao Te Ching* 1 called "naming." William James called it America's "only decidedly original contribution to the systematic philosophy of life," and approved of it for its "cash value," i.e., that it wasn't just a theoretical philosophy but one that actually worked to heal and prosper people and to harmonize troublesome situations. It also agrees with the fundamental understanding of Existentialism that individuals create their identities in this world by what they choose to believe in. 9 pages.

Additions Since the Course Started:

- 23 Robert Lanza, MD: [Five Reasons You Won't Die](#). Quantum physicists are increasingly be-

believing that reality “out there” is actually “in here.” A summary of Lanza’s book [Biocentrism: How Life Creates the Universe](#) (2010), which develops this idea, is [here](#). Be sure to relate Lanza’s ideas to two important concepts we have studied: the concept of the witness in Advaita Vedanta (e.g., in *Ashtavakra Gita*), and Bishop Berkeley’s idea that *esse est percipere*.

- 24 [Parmenides’ poem](#). Parmenides did not give it a title (or we lost it), and the title *On Nature* is just an ancient convention. 3 pages.
- 25 An article on [Karl Popper’s theory of critical rationalism](#). Read this in connection with our discussion of the problem of induction in David Hume. 5 pages.
- 26 Friedrich Nietzsche, [How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error](#). A chapter from his book, *The Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (1888). One page.
- 27 The “Twin Verses,” the teaching of “you are what you think,” from the [Dhammapada](#), the earliest Buddhist document. One page.

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