

PHILOSOPHY 120 FINAL EXAM

Fall 2014

Answer *four* items as directed. Your answers are to be in essay form. Be sure you demonstrate that you have both completed an introductory course in philosophy and can make a valid philosophical argument. Keep in mind Socrates's mantra, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

1. In comparing and contrasting at least two representative philosophers, state what divides rationalists and empiricists in their respective views of truth and the nature of knowledge. Suggest a way to account for their differences and to synthesize them while also arguing your own position on truth and the nature of knowledge.
2. Outline what you see as the connection between two key areas in philosophy (e.g., ethics, epistemology, human nature, etc.). Be sure to state any priority or order of importance one may have over the other and the interdependence they have with each other.
3. Concerning your human nature, state and defend what you believe is basic to being a person and being free. Argue whether humans free or determined? State when you first emerged as an individual with full personhood? When will that personhood cease to be as you approach the end of your life?
4. In terms of moral decision making state what consideration is the key to evaluating what is morally right and wrong in a given situation like the Baby Theresa case discussed in class. Is the key the character of the moral decision maker, some duty regarding the act itself, or the results of the act? State and defend your position against what others might determine.
5. Taking either social contract theory *or* a theory of justice, explain its assumptions, rationale, and importance in relation to the way we live and govern ourselves in the United States and promote the common and individual good. Be sure take into account the place of human rights and "the voices of those long silenced." In other words, consider what feminists, African Americans, or other marginalized people would say about your perspective. Perhaps you may want to refer to recent incidents of white law enforcement officers killing unarmed blacks.
6. Unpack the basic philosophical difference between a religious believer and an adherent of naturalism. What might they have in common and what fundamentally separates them. Then argue and defend your own position. That is, philosophically state *and* make a case for what you accept or don't accept regarding ultimate reality or God.
7. State and defend philosophically what you believe is the meaning of life as you understand it. In the last analysis, are you an optimist or a pessimist? If you are an optimist, state whether your source of meaning is external or internal and whether it provides you with worthwhile meaning to sustain you through suffering and pain. If you are a pessimist, state why and indicate how and why you are able to avoid falling into utter despair.