

# Today's Lecture

- Course outline, (and some interjections about the course),
- Some preliminary comments about philosophy in general and, then, Eastern philosophy.

# Course outline: Office Hours

- Do look over the course outline (this includes the Department of Philosophy Guidelines).
- Re my office hours:
- My office is in Talbot College, room 306. My office hours will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1330-1430.
- My office phone number is 519-661-2111, ext. 85798. I'm afraid I cannot receive collect calls. If you can't see me in person or call me, email me.

# Course outline: Your texts

- You have a secondary text, Koller's 4th edition of *Asian Philosophies*.
- You also have a *Course Pack* at Inprint (over at UCC). It's not ready yet. I'll let you know when it is.
- You have several primary texts: Mitchell's *Bhagavad Gita*, Byrom's *Dhammapada* (which is probably the cutest damn textbook you'll probably purchase for a university course), Conze's *Buddhist Scriptures*, LeGuin's *Tao Te Ching*.

# Course outline: The course website

- This is not a web course. This means the course website does not replace class attendance or interaction with me.
- Not everything I bring up in class lecture will be in the notes.
- Not everything handed out or shown in lectures will be available online.
- I will post a rough version of the lecture notes before each class and then replace this with a revised version sometime after the lecture.
- The URL is: [<instruct.uwo.ca/philosophy/154e/>](http://instruct.uwo.ca/philosophy/154e/)

# Course outline: Your assignments

- You will have **two 1000 words** assignments this term. In the second term you will have **one 1000 word** assignment and **one 2000 word** paper.
- The reason you have so many written assignments is that this is an essay course. The word requirement for this course is spread out, however, so that it is not overwhelming.
- I will assign possible topics for each assignment. This simplifies your task and focuses your study. You will have an opportunity to invent your own paper topic with the 2000 word paper (though I will also supply possible paper topics).

# Course outline: Your assignments

- Do remember you need to submit your assignments to Turnitin.com. To submit to Turnitin you will need to create an account at their site (if, that is, you have not already done so). Just follow the links to Western's Turnitin web page and follow their helpful instructions.
- The course ID number is 1083846 and the password is 'dukkha'.
- If you have any questions about this, ask me. If I have no clue what you are talking about, I will check with someone who does.

# Course outline: Late penalties

- You have three days of grace each term. **You don't have to use them.** Alternatively, you can 'bank' your days of grace from the first term and use them against the assignments for the second term (**though not vice versa**).
- Use them wisely. Once they're gone, they're gone.
- Apart from these days of grace, a 2% daily late penalty will be assigned to late work (the weekend counts as one day).

# Course outline: Your (short) in-class quizzes

- Note the dates for the six in-class quizzes in each term.
- I'll take the best ten out of your twelve in-class quizzes. Each is worth 1% of your final grade.
- The questions are designed to keep you up on your readings, but are, on the whole, rather superficial.
- They also replace a class participation grade. This does not mean you don't have to come to class. Though I'm posting my lecture notes, I often include material in lecture not on the notes. You are responsible for lecture material in the exam.
- Examples of past questions: 'What is rita?', 'What is Atman?', 'What is ahimsa?'



# Course outline: Your final exam

- You have a final exam at the end of the course. This will cover the year's course material.
- Before that causes any undue anxiety or panic remember that, approximately a month before the exam, I will be providing a list of candidate exam questions from which I will choose the exam questions *verbatim*.
- More importantly, this list will not be enormous.

# Course outline: My email policies

- Note that though I will get back to you via email as quick as I can, I may take as long as seven days (particularly over weekends). This means that you shouldn't email me the day before an important deadline.

# Readings for the month of September

- 1<sup>st</sup> week (**Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>**) Introductory remarks; introduction to philosophical method: No readings (see class handout on philosophical method and Eastern Philosophy).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> week (**Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>**) Concluding the introduction to philosophical method; initial orientation to Hinduism; Vedic Hinduism: Class handout; **AP4** Chp.1. (pp.3-11); **AP4** Chp.2, pp.14-19.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week (**Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>**) *The Upanishads*: **AP4** Chp.2, pp.19-26; **CP**.
- 4<sup>th</sup> week (**Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>**) Beginning the *Bhagavad Gita*: **AP4** Chp. 4, pp.44-46; **BG** Chps.1-5 (pp.41-87).
- 5<sup>th</sup> week (**Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> and Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>**) *The Bhagavad Gita* continued: **BG** Chps.6-10 (pp.88-130).

# Some preliminary comments about philosophy and Eastern Philosophy

- This course doesn't presuppose any knowledge of (Western) philosophy. In saying this, you will be required to acquire certain philosophical skills.
- One of the most important philosophical skills involves the ability to critically read your sources. This requires the ability to evaluate the value of a given argument or perspective.

# Some preliminary comments about philosophy and Eastern Philosophy

- Another important philosophical skill is being able to develop good arguments for the position you espouse.
- It's important to realize that it's not having the 'right conclusion' that matters so much as how you get there. **Even when your conclusion is true**, if your argument is flawed or weak, you cannot lay claim to possessing a reasonable position.

# Some preliminary comments about philosophy and Eastern Philosophy

- **An argument is a means of rationally persuading someone (even yourself) to believe a claim or statement.**
- An argument can be divided into the reasons for believing the claim or statement to be true or probably true (these are called premises), and the claim or statement itself (this is called the conclusion).
- In argument analysis we look at two basic areas of an argument: (A) The truth or probable truth of the premises and (B) the relation of the premises to the conclusion.
- Evaluate an argument according to three criteria: (1) Acceptability; (2) Relevance; (3) (adequacy of) Grounds (or **ARG**).

# Some preliminary comments about philosophy and Eastern Philosophy

- A third, and final skill to be mentioned here, is being open to critical self-evaluation. The best philosophy is painful philosophy. That is to say, when your philosophical reflection is adversely affecting your various comfort zones, then you are doing philosophy proper. We all have areas of belief about which we find it hard to be critical, and that includes many so-called professional philosophers, but good philosophy requires both **sincerity**, in approaching the areas of study critically AND fairly, and **a degree of authenticity**, in approaching areas close to you with a (fair) degree of critical analysis.

# Some preliminary comments about philosophy and Eastern Philosophy

- When studying Eastern philosophy two attitudes are regrettably more common than any other, we tend to be **gullible** (commonly referred to as 'being flakey') or we tend to be **dismissive**.
- Neither of these attitudes are optimal for doing philosophy.
- If we can imagine these two attitudes to be at opposite end points of a spectrum of possible attitudes, then we should see the optimal approach as somewhere in between. Let me christen this approach, **the reflectively critical approach**.