

Preparation Tool for Exam 2

PHIL 100, Fall 2006

Matt Barker's Friday Sections

For your second exam, Professor Odell has made available a very helpful set of study questions. It is posted on my website and on the main website for PHIL 100. This will go a long way toward streamlining your study efforts. Given this study guide, there is not a lot of additional help that I can offer. But let me mention how you might use Professor Odell's study guide most effectively.

1. The study guide lists five possible exam questions. Professor Odell will put three of these on the exam, and then you will choose to answer two of those three. This means that any triplet taken from the five questions may be on the exam, so you **should study all five**. Because you know what the possibilities are, you shouldn't need to "gamble" in the way I've previously mentioned you might. That is, instead of studying all topics moderately and studying two or three philosophers in more depth, now you should just study in depth the five possible topics you've been given.
2. **Definitions:** You'll remember from the first exam that **definitions need to be precise**. Philosophy is often concerned with providing precise definitions of terms and concepts, so treat these more like questions you'd get on a math exam, rather than like questions you'd get on an English exam. That is, the definitions **can be right or wrong; there are few shades of grey**. So, **"close enough" won't get you full marks**.

You are responsible for terms mentioned in lecture and found in the following three places:

- a. Class syllabus (<http://www.glue.umd.edu/%7Ewkallfel/PHIL100Fall2006/Phil100Syllb.pdf>)
All terms from "metaphysics" up to (but not including) "axiology," with emphasis on terms introduced since the last exam
 - b. Text glossary, definitions of "primary quality" and "secondary quality."
 - c. Main terms in the "skepticism" and "natural origins of religion" sections of the class handout on "God and Skepticism"
(<http://www.glue.umd.edu/~wkallfel/PHIL100Sp2006/PHIL100godskept.pdf>)
3. **General Strategy for Essay Questions:** Unlike in your term papers, on the exam you aren't expected to provide much original thought. Rather, you are expected to demonstrate that you understand topics, concepts and arguments (and objections/replies to them) discussed in class. So for example, even if you think you have a nifty argument that shows that Descartes' arguments for God are sound, on the exam it's best to show that you understand the common objections to them.

While writing essays, remember to consult my general advice on essay writing, found on the Exam Preparation Tool for Exam 1.

Given the study questions you have, the best way to study for the essay questions is to **follow something like this procedure**:

- a. Take note of the key concepts that Professor Odell has said need to be discussed for each question.
- b. In your text readings, class handouts and lecture notes, locate the relevant discussions of the key concepts you've isolated.

- c. Read the passages concerned with these concepts and work to understand the arguments related to them and how the concepts and related arguments fit into the broader context, e.g., the broader project of the philosopher who is discussing the concepts and arguing about them, etc.
- d. You should then begin to develop some understanding of how the concepts under a given question all fit together, how arguments for them run, and what problems other philosophers have said afflict these arguments. For each question, practice writing an essay that demonstrates this integrated understanding.

Steps 3(a) through 3(d) are steps you largely have to take on your own. Although I'd like to, I can't really carry out these steps for you. For example, I can't tell you exactly where in the text to read about Berkeley's objection to Locke's theory of perception and Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities (though below I will give you some rough location tips). You need to learn how to locate the relevant concepts and arguments on your own. But certainly you should use my Friday handouts and your lecture notes to assist you here: **these notes and handouts only hit the highlights, not all the detail you will need to know; but they will certainly help set the context for you and help you go on to flesh things out in more detail on your own.**

4. **Specific Info on each Essay Question:** Here is a general guide for where to find the discussions of relevant concepts/arguments that pertain to each of the four possible essay questions:
 - a. **Question on Descartes:** text, your lecture notes, Friday handouts.
 - b. **Question on Odell's naturalistic explanation of the origins of religion:** your lecture notes and class handout entitled "God and Skepticism" (<http://www.glue.umd.edu/~wkallfel/PHIL100Sp2006/PHIL100godskept.pdf>).
 - c. **Question on Locke's theory of perception and responses by Berkeley and Hume:** text, your lecture notes, Friday handouts.
 - d. **Question on philosophical skepticism:** class handout on "God and Skepticism" (<http://www.glue.umd.edu/~wkallfel/PHIL100Sp2006/PHIL100godskept.pdf>), students' lecture notes, and my blurb about equivocation on last Friday's handout.

Good luck!