

Review Sheet -- Examination I

The purpose of this sheet is to provide a brief list of learning objectives for the exam. It focuses principally on the sorts of material that will be covered on the longer essays and in some of the sort essay questions. It is not meant to cover all material assigned in the readings. Some shorter questions will focus on material assigned in reading but not covered in class. Also remember that the purpose of the Midterm is for you to show me that you understand the material covered in class. Displaying this understanding means that you can recognize and define critical terms and that you can give adequate and precise reasons for positions that you assert or that you attribute to others.

You will asked to compare and contrast the positions we have studied in class. The concepts of compatibility and incompatibility play a crucial role in assessing philosophical positions as well as comparing and contrasting them with other positions. Statements are COMPATIBLE with each other when they can be held without contradiction. For example, the statement (A) humans can exercise free choice is compatible with (B) humans have unlimited possibilities from which to choose and (C) humans always face only a limited number of possibilities when they choose. Statements are INCOMPATIBLE with each other when they cannot be held without contradiction: if one is false the other must be true (although both may be false). For example, statements (B) and (C) above are incompatible with each other. Also, for example, (at least in the world in which we live) it is incompatible to hold that Dr. Jones is a porcupine and that Dr. Jones is a giraffe. (Note that both these statements are false.)

UNIT I: Human life as a quest for meaning. Successful study of material for this unit means that you should be able to:

1. discuss the sense in which human life is a project or task to be achieved both practically at the level of freedom and “theoretically” at the level of understanding;
discuss the relation between questions and methods; characterize the notion of a method; explain the relation between questions, methods, and worldviews.
2. (with regard to Plato’s *Apology*) define mytho-poetic existence and discuss the sorts of explanations of the world it provides;
state and discuss the various charges leveled against Socrates--including the historical background behind them;
discuss the Delphic Oracle’s claim that Socrates was the wisest person in Athens and how that claim determined Socrates’ “mission” among the Athenians. You should also be prepared to discuss Socrates’ assessment of the poets, politicians and artisans;
discuss the twofold nature of ignorance and the role of Philosophy in overcoming ignorance.
3. (with regard to Ellison’s *Invisible Man*) define invisibility, inner-eye and outer-eye
discuss the nature of the IM’s invisibility;
discuss the nature of his quest for light (both intelligible light and visible light) and the manner in which the quest for visible light is a response to his invisibility and allows him to overcome it;
discuss the nature of his assessment of Louis Armstrong and his music as well as the “dream sequence” the IM has while listening to the music (this includes the IM’s assessment of the manner in which his fellow blacks understand their own invisibility.)
4. compare and contrast the above writings with regard to the unit theme of human life as a quest for meaning.

UNIT II (Freedom) Successful study of material for this unit means that you should be able to

1. Precisely set forth the meaning of what is involved in saying (1) that something is causally determined by external/internal factors to act in a certain way and (2) that something can choose to act in a certain way ;
Discuss the problems that arise in know whether something/someone has chosen to act in a certain way: whether we can determined this through empirical observation; inner experience, etc.
2. (with regard to the reading by Thiroux) define: universal causation, hard determinism, soft determinism, and indeterminism;
discuss the basic positions of hard determinism, soft determinism and indeterminism vis a vis the compatibility between universal causation and human freedom. You should be able to compare and contrast these positions and explain how each would critique and reject the others;
discuss the various sorts of determinist positions that Thiroux considers (e.g., theological determinism, social determinism, etc.) as well as the discussion of Skinner’s position (both the behaviorism and the scientism) as set forth on the notes for unit II;
3. (with regard to the reading by Aquinas): set forth his argument for free will and discuss why someone might say that the argument simply assumes free will rather than proves it.