PHIL 102 Midterm Study Guide
Hendricks, February 2018

Format of the exam

<u>1. Outline an argument from a passage</u>

You will be given a passage of text from one of the texts assigned as required reading for the course, from the beginning of the course (Socrates/Plato) through the Mill readings.

You will need to:

- **Outline the argument in the passage**: give the premises (number them 1, 2, 3, etc.) and the conclusion. You can use quotes from the passage for premises and conclusion if you wish, or put them in your own words (the latter is sometimes more helpful for us to see why you might have picked the premises you did, because it helps us to see how you're interpreting the passage).
    o The order of the premises won't matter unless it's the case that one logically follows from or is supported by earlier ones.
    o There is usually more than one way to outline premises for an argument (though the conclusion would usually be the same across these), so we'll be looking for whether the way you've outlined the premises makes sense of the passage and the logical structure of the argument, not so much whether they match exactly how we would have outlined them.

- **Say which philosopher or philosophical theory the passage is from**. So, for example, if the passage is from either Epicurus or Cicero, you could just say it's "Epicurean" (you won't have to distinguish between Epicurus and Cicero). Also, for Socrates/Plato, you don't have to say which of the two texts we've read that the passage is from. Just say it's from Socrates or Plato.

- **Explain how the argument in this passage connects to a larger argument the philosopher makes, or some other aspect of their overall view**. The idea here is to help us see why you think the passage is from one philosopher rather than another, and for you to show that you understand more of the philosopher's view than only that one passage.

<u>2. Medium-length essay question</u>

You will be provided with at least two essay questions, and you will need to choose one to write about during the exam. You should aim to spend about 25-30 minutes on this section.

What to study

For the part where you need to outline a passage, it should be enough if you've done the readings and followed along in class (including in discussion groups), for you to be able to: (a) know how to outline arguments, and (b) recognize a passage as belonging to one philosopher or another, and how it fits into

another aspect of their views. We will choose a passage that, so far as we can tell, clearly identifies one philosopher or philosophical view over another, that connects with some main point in their view.

For the medium-length essay: if you are prepared to discuss the following, you should be good to answer any of the essay questions on the exam. The topics below are not the actual questions as they will be worded, but general topics. Also, it's not the case that one question will include *all* of the bullet points under each of the two sections below. The questions would instead focus on *one* of those.

Possible general topics for the essay questions

You may be asked to do a <u>comparison/contrast</u> between the views of two philosophers:

- Socrates/Plato and Epicurus on what is important in life
- Epicurus and Nagel on whether death is a bad thing for the person who dies
- Mill & Mozi on how we should treat others, and why

You may be asked to first <u>explain and then evaluate</u> an argument from one of the philosophers we've studied (where "evaluate" means explain what you find to be strengths and weaknesses, or only weaknesses as in the case of the third point, below):

- Explain and evaluate Epicurus' argument for one of:
    o Why we shouldn't fear death
    o Why a life of static pleasure, focused on mainly natural and necessary desires, is most pleasant
- Explain and evaluate Nagel's argument for why death is a bad thing for the person who dies
- What criticisms or objections could be to raised Mill's utilitarian view of morality? Explain one part of his view that you think could be criticized and then explain why it's problematic.