

INTRO PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy 103, Spring 2019

M/W 7:15 - 8:35 PM, Hickman Hall
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Office hours: TBD

Philosophy is about big questions. We will be focusing on four examples: Is there a god? Is the mind physical? What do we know? How should we act? Our aim is not a comprehensive historical overview. Instead, we will be developing the skills that philosophers use to address these questions. By the end of the course, you should be better able to understand the arguments of others, and use your own ideas to evaluate them.

Requirements

Participation (15%)

Attendance will be taken at each meeting, and participation in discussion is required. For each meeting, three of you will be made 'designated responders'. This means that you will be tasked with emailing me two thoughtfully constructed (but short) questions or comments on the reading for that meeting, *the day before the meeting*. I may then call on you during the meeting to share your comment or question with the class. *You will all have to do this three times* in the course of the semester. Your participation grade will then be based on these reading responses together with your contributions to class discussion.

Midterm exam (25%)

This will be during our last meeting before Spring Break, on 3/13. It will be based on the material we will have covered so far. It will be a combination of multiple choice questions and short essay questions. Missed exams will receive a grade of zero, except in documented serious circumstances.

Short writing assignments (25%)

There will be three short writing assignments:

- An extraction of the argument in an assigned passage, due on 2/11 (10%)
 - A revised extraction and short justification (~400 words) based on the same passage, due on 2/25 (10%)
 - An extraction of the passage you choose for the final paper, due on 4/24 (5%)
- NB: You must complete this task to get a grade for your final paper!

Final paper (35%)

1500 – 2000 words, due on 5/6. You will have a choice between two passages. You will be asked to extract the argument from the passage you choose, and then justify and evaluate it.

Written assignments must be turned in via Sakai before class on the due date. There will be a two-day grace-period with no lateness penalty; after that the penalty will be 2.5 points per day. Exceptions only for documented serious circumstances; technological mistakes are not excuses.

Resources

Textbook is: Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, *Reason and Responsibility* (16th ed). (Feel free to purchase a previous edition, but you will need to find other access to any missing readings.)

Readings which aren't in the textbook, assignments, handouts, study guides, canceled classes and other announcements will be posted on the Sakai site.

Guidelines for discussion

Philosophical discussions should be *cooperative rather than competitive* - this makes them both more enjoyable and more productive. Here are a few guidelines to help keep us cooperative:

- Respect others and their contributions: don't be mean, and never interrupt.
- Carefully listen to and think about what other people have to say. Try to build on their points, instead of tearing them down, connecting what you are saying to what others have said.
- Don't dominate the discussion. In fact, do the opposite: actively work to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to talk.
- Don't worry about impressing anyone. If there's something you don't understand, or you're not following the discussion, please ask for clarification!

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: *what is philosophy and how is it done?*

Is there a god?

Week 2: Cosmological Arguments

Aquinas, "The Five Ways"; Clark, "A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument";
Rowe, "The Cosmological Argument"

Week 3: The Problem of Evil

Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"; Van Inwagen, "The Argument from Evil"

Week 4: Pascal's Wager

Pascal, "The Wager"

(2/11: First writing assignment due)

Is the mind physical?

Week 5: Conceivability Arguments for Dualism

Gertler, "In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism";
Chalmers, "The Conscious Mind", pp. 93 – 101 (Sakai)

Week 6: The Causal Argument for Physicalism
Papineau, "The Case for Materialism"
(See also: Lewis, "An Argument for the Identity Theory" (Sakai))
(2/25: Second writing assignment due)

Week 7: The Knowledge Argument for Dualism
Jackson, "The Qualia Problem"
(See also: Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know", (Sakai))

Week 8: Types of Physicalism
Ney, "Physicalism as an attitude" (Sakai);
Churchland, "Functionalism and Eliminative Materialism"
(3/13 Midterm exam)

[Spring break]

What do we know?

Week 9: Skepticism and the Problem of Induction
Pollock, "A Brain in a Vat"; Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy", Meditations I and II
Hume, "An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding", Section IV

Week 10: Responses to Skepticism (Part I)
Moore, "Proof of an External World"; Russell, "Appearance and Reality and the Existence of Matter"

Week 11: Responses to Skepticism (Part II)
Rinard, "Reasoning one's Way out of Skepticism" (Sakai)

How should we act?

Week 12: Is ethics subjective?
Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Subjectivism"

Week 13: Trolley Problems
Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem" (Sakai)
(4/24 Third writing assignment due)

Week 14: Giving to Charity
Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"; Wolf, "Moral Saints" (Sakai)
(5/6 Final paper due)