

PHIL 110 – Spring 2017

T/R 4:30-5:45

BRNG 1254

Instructor: Taylor Davis

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Introduction to Philosophy

This course has two primary aims:

- (1) Provide exposure to a sample of philosophical issues and debates
- (2) Develop skills in formulating arguments and writing essays

The topics discussed include such questions as: Does God exist? Is the mind just the brain, or is there more to it? Do human beings ever act freely, or is all action determined by natural laws? How can we know that the regularity of the past is a guide to predicting the future? Can science explain everything? The course will help you to formulate your own answers to such questions, by critically examining the answers previous philosophers have given. No prior experience with philosophy is necessary.

Regarding the other aim: Argumentation is the basic methodology of philosophy, so learning to do philosophy means learning to develop clear and convincing arguments—even about difficult and abstract topics. Since to defend a thesis is just to provide an argument, these skills will also prove useful for writing strong essays in other university courses. More generally, the ability to persuade others of one's own views is extremely useful outside the classroom. Thus, the benefits of developing skills in argumentation, critical thinking and writing extend far beyond the scope of the particular philosophical issues we'll discuss.

Required Texts:

Core Questions in Philosophy, 6th Edition, by Elliott Sober

Additional articles posted on the Blackboard website

Evaluation:

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|-----------------------------|-----|
| Essay 1 (2-3 pages): | 15% |
| Mid-term exam: | 15% |
| Essay 2 (4-5 pages): | 30% |
| Final Exam: | 30% |
| Attendance / Participation: | 10% |

Grades will be assigned according to this chart:

| Final average | Course grade | Final average | Course grade |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 98% and above | A+ | 77% and above | C+ |
| 93% and above | A | 73% and above | C |
| 90% and above | A- | 70% and above | C- |
| 87% and above | B+ | 60% and above | D |
| 83% and above | B | 59.9 and below | F |
| 80% and above | B- | | |

Essays:

Two essays are required: one “short” essay (2-3 pages), *not on a philosophical topic*, and one “long” essay (4-5 pages), which *is* on a philosophical topic. Assignments will be posted on the Blackboard, along with a separate document providing general guidelines for writing essays. We will also discuss essay writing in detail in class.

Papers not turned in by midnight on the day they are due are LATE. For each day late, 7 points will be deducted. Papers must be submitted online, through Blackboard, and submitted to SafeAssign for an originality check.

Final Exam:

The exams will be cumulative, up to the point at which they occur. They will be comprised of both essay and short answer questions.

Since the final exam is a large portion of your grade, the last day of class has been set aside for a review session. However, I will not plan anything for this day; you are responsible for making the review session useful. You will drive the agenda by bringing in your own questions.

Attendance and Make up Policy:

Note that 10% of your grade is attendance and participation. In general, I expect students to be in class and to be prepared, having read and thought about the material. These readings are not to be passively consumed, so if you have no questions or comments about them, you probably aren’t actually engaging with the material. This is often apparent later, in essays and exam responses that display a superficial understanding of the views involved.

That said, I also assume, by default, that everyone is participating, so everyone begins the course with all 10 participation points. This means that as long as you don’t stand out as someone whose participation is lacking, you will get full credit. I may not notice if you miss one or two classes, or if you go three weeks without making a comment in class. But if I realize halfway through the term that you’ve never spoken at all, or if you miss class for several days in a row, then I have a way to enforce standards.

If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the readings, and to find out whether you missed any key announcements in class. Contact me or another student to follow up.

I encourage students to drop by my office during office hours to further discuss issues from class, and especially to discuss essay writing strategy. If you are unable to come to my office hours, please feel free send me an email so we can set up an appointment.

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities.

Office Hours:

Location: Beering 7136

Mon & Wed: 3:00 - 4:00

Or by appointment, if needed—send me an email.

Plagiarism:

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and her name will be given to the university authorities.

The internet has made plagiarism an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade. In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material must be acknowledged. When in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism. Please ask in class if you have any questions about how to properly cite sources.

Purdue's Online Writing Lab also has useful info about how to correctly cite your sources:

A Note about Philosophy on the Internet:

Internet sources on philosophy can *sometimes* be useful for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but most of these sources are just horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, use these:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Devices:

I'll assume that anyone looking at a phone is not participating. Laptop computers are allowed *only for taking notes*. Note that almost anything you do other than taking notes will probably distract the other people around you, which is why many instructors don't allow laptops in class at all. If I see the other people around you looking at your computer screen, I'll get suspicious, and start asking questions. I also reserve the right to ban laptops completely if they prove too distracting.

Emergencies:

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and even grading percentages are subject to change. Information about emergency changes in the course

can be obtained by consulting the course website, or, if necessary by contacting me via email or phone. Purdue's Emergency Procedures Handbook and other important emergency planning information are available online at: http://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/

Course Schedule and Readings

| <u>Topic</u> | <u>Assigned Reading</u> |
|--------------|-------------------------|
|--------------|-------------------------|

Introduction and Overview

Arguments: The Currency of Philosophy

Deductive Arguments Chapter 2

Inductive and Abductive Arguments Chapter 3

Philosophy of Religion: The Existence of God

Cosmological Arguments Chapter 4

The Local Design Argument Chapter 5

Writing Essays in Philosophy

The Global Design Argument Swinburne Handout

Can Science Explain Everything? Chapter 7

ESSAY #1 DUE

Epistemology

What is Knowledge? Chapter 12

Descartes' Skepticism Descartes Handout #1

Descartes' Foundationalism Chapter 13

The Reliability Theory of Knowledge Chapter 14

Hume on Empirical Knowledge Hume Handout #1, Part 1

Hume's Problem of Induction Hume Handout #1, Part 2
Chapter 15

MIDTERM EXAM

The Problem of Free Will

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|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Introduction to Free Will | Chapter 24 |
| Positions on Free Will | Chapter 25 |
| Hume's Compatibilism | Hume Handout #2 |
| Mill's Compatibilism | Mill Handout |

ESSAY #2 DUE

Philosophy of Mind

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|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Descartes' Dualism | Descartes Handout #2 |
| The Mind-Body Problem | Chapter 19 |
| Behaviorism | Chapters 20 & 21 |
| Mind-Brain Identity | Chapter 22 |
| Functionalism | Chapter 23 |

Metaethics

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Normative Ethics and Metaethics | Chapter 28 |
| The Is/Ought Gap | Chapter 29 |
| Observation and Explanation in Ethics | Chapter 30 |
| Euthyphro's Dilemma | Plato Handout (p. 1-15 only) |
| Conventionalist Theories | Chapter 31 |
| Utilitarianism | Singer Handout |

Final Exam Review – last day of class

FINAL EXAM