

PHIL 110
Introduction to Philosophy
SUMMER 2016

Instructor: Daniel Skibra,

Time and Location: M, W 1:00-4:00pm, Location TBA

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Office Hours: W 11:00-12:00am, Crowe Hall, 3rd floor (left at the top of the stairs) (or by appointment)

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the study of philosophy by examining a sample of traditional problems that have long occupied philosophers. The goals of the course are two-fold. First, it aims to give students a background in some of the most persistent topics in philosophy (like the nature of knowledge, the mind and body, freedom and determinism, personal identity, and others) and in the arguments that both contemporary and historical philosophers have made about about these topics. Second, it aims to help students develop the tools for engaging in philosophical thinking themselves, which will be of use to them both in other philosophy courses, as well as in other disciplines.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- learn to understand philosophical arguments
- develop their own informed views on the topics of study
- present the arguments of the philosophers as well their own views in
- subject both the views studied as well as their own to critical scrutiny.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Short responses (5): 15%
Reading Quizzes (>5): 5%
Paper 1 (3-4 pages): 25%
Paper 2 (5-6 pages): 30%

Final Exam (not big): 15%
Class discussion/ participation: 10%

Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>
- https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/

Course Policies

Attendance

Your attendance in class is required. However, you may accumulate up to 2 unexcused absences without being penalized. Your grade will drop 2/3 of a letter grade for every subsequent unexcused absence (remember, since this is a summer course, every class meeting is equivalent to a week's worth of classes during the school year). Whether you miss class with or without an excuse, you are always responsible to keep up with the readings.

Students with Disabilities

Any student needing accommodations should speak directly to AccessibleNU ((847) 467-5530 or accessiblenu@northwestern.edu) and to me as early as possible in the quarter. Be aware that AccessibleNU will help arrange reasonable accommodations for both physical and mental health concerns. Barring unforeseen circumstance, any necessary arrangements should be made within the first three weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential.

Email/ Communication

The best way to reach me outside class is via email. However, give me 24 hours to respond during the week. If you email me after 5pm on Friday, don't expect a response until Monday morning. Most of the time, I will be able to respond to you sooner than this, but when there is a paper due, get all of your questions to be 48 hours before the due date.

I will answer *simple, specific* questions over email pertaining to the course material or the logistics of the course. I can also address simple interpretive questions you have with the material, or arguments you are trying out for your papers. To address anything more involved, you'll need to meet with me in office hours. (I highly encourage you to come to office hours in any event.)

Participation

Participation in class discussion constitutes a significant part of your grade. You will be expected to attend class having done the readings and thought about them enough to discuss the arguments they make, to ask informed questions about them, and to engage with the other members of the class on these matters. Two expectations in service of these aims are worth making explicit. First, you'll need to be well-prepared, having read and thought about the assigned readings before class. Secondly, we will all need to foster a respectful, open environment where we can clarify, interpret and critically engage the philosophical issues dealt with in readings. Maintaining a respectful classroom atmosphere is crucial, and part of your responsibility.

Required Texts

All the readings for the course will be posted on Canvas. You do not need to purchase any books for this class.

Course Outline

Week 1 *What is knowledge, and do we have any?*

Monday JUNE 20

- **Readings:** Plato- *Theatetus* (excerpts)
AJ Ayer- *Knowing as Having the Right to Be Sure*
Ed Gettier- *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Read this (online):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

Wednesday JUNE 22

- **Readings:** Descartes- *First Meditation*
Hilary Putnam- Chapter 1 (pp. 1- 21) of *Reason Truth and History*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading Response #1 due
Question: *How and why does Descartes call everything into doubt?*

Week 2 *How is the mind related to the body?*

Monday JUNE 27

- **Readings:** Descartes- *Meditations 2 & 6*
Excerpts of letter from Elizabeth of Bohemia to Descartes
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** –

Wednesday JUNE 29

- **Readings:** Jen McWeeny- *Princess Elizabeth and the Mind-Body Problem*
JCC Smart- *Sensations and Brain Processes*
David Armstrong- *the Nature of Mind*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading Response #2 due
Question: *What are Armstrong's objections to behaviorism?*

Week 3 *What kind of things are we?***Monday** JULY 4

- No class today; Northwestern is closed
We are still responsible for today's material, so it has been distributed to other days

Wednesday JULY 6

- **Readings:** John Locke- *Of Identity and Diversity* (from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*)
David Hume- *Of Personal Identity* (from *A Treatise on Human Nature*)
Marya Schechtman- *Personal Identity and the Past*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Paper #1 due

Week 4 *Why do good?***Monday** JULY 11

- **Readings:** Robert Gooding-Williams- *Race, Multiculturalism and Democracy*
Plato *Euthyphro*
Immanuel Kant *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals* (Section I)
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading Response #3 due
Question: *What point does Kant illustrate with the shopkeeper example, and what kind of actions have the most moral worth, according to Kant? (Explain why this is so.)*

Wednesday JULY 13

- **Readings:** John Stuart Mill- *Utilitarianism* (excerpts)
Judith Jarvis Thomson- *A Defense of Abortion*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading Response #4 due
Question: *What is Thomson's argument for the permissibility of abortion, even if one grants that it is the taking of a life?*

Week 5 *What does it all matter, anyway?*

Monday JULY 18

- **Readings:** Peter Singer- *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*
J. L. Mackie- *The Subjectivity of Values* from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading Response #5 due
Question: *What does Mackie mean by when he says that there are no objective moral values and how does he argue for this?*

Wednesday JULY 20

- **Readings:** Friedrich Nietzsche- *On Truth and lies in an extra-moral sense*
Jean-Paul Sartre- *Existentialism is a Humanism* (excerpts)
Thomas Nagel- *the Absurd*
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Paper #2 due

Friday JULY 22

- No class (obviously), but...
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Final exam due