

PHL 210-52
Introduction to Philosophy
SPRING 2019

Instructor: Daniel Skibra

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Virtual Office Hours: Thursday, 12:00-1:00pm, using Blackboard's Collaborate, or by appointment

Course Description

From course catalog: A critical examination of some of the basic problems of philosophy. Among topics discussed are: the nature of reality, of human knowledge, and of moral, esthetic, and religious values.

Instructor's description: This class will introduce students to the study of philosophy through an examination of some classic problems in philosophy. It will introduce students to techniques used to investigate the questions posed by these problems, and provoke students to develop and defend their own positions on these questions. We will read one shorter work, Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in its entirety, and we will use this to frame a number of the subsequent questions we will be examining. Among the questions we will discuss: Can we know anything at all?/ Are there reasons to think we don't actually know anything? What's the relation between the mind and the body? What makes a someone the same person across stretches of time? Do we have free will? What is morally right?/ How do we determine what is right?

- Understand and critically engage with major strains of philosophical thought as ongoing attempts to solve important puzzles of human life.
- Understand and be able to articulate important arguments regarding central philosophical topics, such as the problem of evil, the grounds and limits of human knowledge, the mind-body problem, personal identity, free will and responsibility, and morality.
- Analyze and construct philosophical arguments effectively, both orally and in writing.

ECIC Area of Knowledge (Inquiry into Ethics and Justice)

This course explores theories and instances of justice and injustice in current and historical human societies. Students will analyze different systems of values that inform how people interact as individuals as well as members of larger societal groups. The course examines

ethical reasoning bearing on such principles as liberty, rights, dissent, moral status, equality, and justice.

- Understand several distinct systems of ethical reasoning and theories of value and justice;
- Evaluate in their contexts specific historical and contemporary theories or actions;
- Articulate and evaluate multiple perspectives on ethics and social justice.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Reading Quizzes: 10%

Paper 1 (Due **March 11**) (2-3 pages): 15%

Paper 2 (Due **April 1**) (3-4 pages): 15%

Paper 3 (Due **May 18**) (4-5 pages): 15%

Mid-term Exam (week of **April 1**): 15%

Final Exam (week of **May 21**): 15%

Discussion facilitation/ participation: 15%

Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Course Policies

Attendance

Since this is an online class, we will not be meeting in person. However, you will still be responsible being “present” every week. Most importantly, that includes participating in the online discussion forum, taking an quiz assigned for that week, submitting any assignments that are due, and being in touch with me if you have any questions or concerns, or if you encounter any difficulties.

Be aware that failing to participate is like consistently being absent from class. If it seems to you like you will have trouble keeping up with participating in a timely manner, do make it a point to discuss the matter with me, much as you would if you were missing a lot of class.

Access and Disability Services

Elmhurst College will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities based on the presentation of appropriate documentation. If you believe that you have a disability that may impact your work in this course, contact Access and Disability Services at disability.services@elmhurst.edu or 630-617-6448. **Access and Disability Services is located in the Frick Center, Room 229.**

Learning Center: Academic Support

The Learning Center offers services to support the academic performance of all Elmhurst College students. Sessions are structured to promote principles of self-regulated learning and academic management. Areas of peer tutoring include math, statistics, writing, biology, kinesiology, and psychology. Additionally, assistance with special test preparation (e.g., ACT, SAT, GRE, and TAP) and academic reading/study strategies is available. For more information, contact Emmi McAdams, Tutoring Coordinator, at emmim@elmhurst.edu, 630-617-5376, or Susan Roach, Learning Center Director, at susan.roach@elmhurst.edu, 630-617-3155. **The Learning Center is located in the Frick Center, Room 229.**

Statement Regarding Netiquette

Netiquette refers to Online Etiquette, and it is the expectation of the College that all students will use appropriate online etiquette for interaction in online courses and using online communication tools, such as email and instant messaging. Common guidelines include:

- Avoid using strong or offensive language;
- Be forgiving. If something offends you, work with the instructor regarding the incident, rather than engaging in further enflamed discussion;
- Remember that your online messages and course postings live forever, so proof-read your work before you press Send.
- Avoid typing ALL IN CAPS. This is considered “shouting” online.
- Be concise; your points may be lost in a lengthy text;
- Give credit where credit is due: Use citations as appropriate;
- Avoid using Reply All in email messages.

Code of Academic Integrity

Elmhurst College is a community of scholars. Such a community places the highest value on academic honesty and integrity. Therefore, Elmhurst College’s Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure:

1. A fair academic environment where students are evaluated on the scholarly merits of their work.

2. An academic environment where person integrity is fostered.
3. An understanding of standard academic practices when formulating ideas, conducting research, and documenting sources.

It is the responsibility of each student to know and understand this academic integrity policy. There are general campus-wide definitions of academic honesty as well as department guidelines. Students are responsible for educating themselves on this matter since sanctions for academic dishonesty may be severe. Thus, Elmhurst College students should act honestly in all academic work. Please refer to [the Elmhurst College E-Book](#) for additional information.

Student Code of Conduct

The College attempts to establish a climate which encourages the assumption of responsibility by students for their individual and collective actions with a minimum of rules and regulations. It shall be the responsibility of each student to comply with appropriate standards of conduct and decorum befitting a member of an educational community. Please refer to [the Elmhurst College E-Book](#) for additional information.

Philosophy Department's Policy on Academic Integrity

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the College's Academic Integrity Policy. By registering for this class, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Policy, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by it. Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur.

If a faculty member suspects plagiarism or cheating, the faculty member will meet with the student to discuss the allegations. Upon meeting with the student, the faculty member must determine if a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity did occur. If the student is found responsible for dishonest behavior, the faculty member will report incident to the Chair of the philosophy department and will choose one or more of the following procedures:

1. Provide a learning opportunity by having the student re-do the assignment without any other penalty attached;
2. Consider it "poor work" and grade accordingly with a zero or F for the assignment or an F for the course; and/or
3. Refer the student to the College's formal judicial hearing process by sending a letter containing the allegations and evidence to the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Office of Academic Affairs. This sanction is recommended in cases where a violation is serious or the student has committed repeat violations. The Office of Student Affairs will notify the student, in writing, of the allegations and give them the opportunity to review the evidence.

Statement Regarding the Use of Plagiarism Detection Services

Faculty members may at any time submit a student's work for review by a plagiarism detection service.

Non-Discrimination/Non-Harassment Policy

The College believes that all employees and students should be able to work and learn in an educational environment free from discrimination and harassment. Harassment includes unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, physical, written or graphic, that is based on protected group status such as race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran's status, or other protected status. Please refer to [the Elmhurst College E-Book](#) for additional information.

Extension Policy and Incompletes

The due dates for the assignments are as they appear on the syllabus or within Blackboard. Late assignments will not be tolerated, and will accumulate deductions of one third of a letter grade for every day the assignment is late. If you think you will need an extension for an assignment, you need to request one at least two days before the due date. Do not ask after the date has passed, or the night before the deadline.

Email/ Communication

The best way to reach me is via email at daniel.skibra@elmhurst.edu. Give me 24 hours to respond during the week, and 48 hours to respond if you email at the end of the day on Friday. Most of the time, I will respond sooner than this. 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, it would be best to chat or video-conference with me during my office hours, listed above. If this time is inconvenient for you, send me an email to schedule an alternative time.

Required Texts

- John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer - *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings 8th Edition*, Oxford University Press, 2018 (ISBN: 978-0190698720)
- Any other texts will be posted to the course's Blackboard site.

Reading and Assignment Schedule*

*The readings/ assignments should be completed by the date indicated. The readings with Vaughn listed as the author are the introductions to the chapters. For these assignments, you are to read the entire chapter

introduction through to the “further reading” section. Any reading with a * will be posted on Canvas.

Week	Mon	Fri	Assignment
Module 1: Introduction			
WEEK 1	FEB 4	FEB 8	Russell - <i>the Value of Philosophy</i> Plato - <i>Apology: Defense of Socrates</i> also look over: Perry et al. - <i>Logical Toolkit</i>
Module 2: Descartes's Meditations			
WEEK 2	FEB 11	FEB 15	Descartes - <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> read Meditations I, II, and III; pp. 136 - 147
WEEK 3	FEB 18	FEB 22	Descartes - <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> Finish the <i>Meditations</i> : read Meditations IV, V, and VI; pp. 147 - 160
Module 3: Epistemology and Skepticism			
WEEK 4	FEB 25	MARCH 1	Grau - <i>Bad Dreams Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and the Matrix</i> Nozick - <i>Excerpt from Philosophical Investigations</i>
Module 4: Minds and Consciousness			
WEEK 5	MARCH 4	MARCH 8	Russell - <i>the Argument From Analogy for Other Minds</i> Ryle - <i>Descartes's Myth</i> Armstrong - <i>The Nature of Mind</i>
WEEK 6	MARCH 11	MARCH 15	Turing - <i>Computing Machinery and Intelligence</i> Searle - <i>Minds, Brains, and Programs</i>
WEEK 7	MARCH 18	MARCH 22	Nagel - <i>What is it Like to Be a Bat?</i> Jackson - <i>What Mary Didn't Know</i> Lewis - <i>Knowing What it is Like</i>
WEEK 8	MARCH 25	MARCH 29	Spring Recess - no class
WEEK 9	APRIL 1	APRIL 5	Mid Term
Module 5: Personal Identity			
WEEK 10	APRIL 8	APRIL 12	Lock - <i>Of Identity and Diversity</i> * not in book - look for pdf on Blackboard Perry - <i>A Dialogue on Personal Identity</i> Williams - <i>the Self and the Future</i> Parfit - <i>Personal Identity</i>
Module 6: Free Will			
WEEK 11	APRIL 15	APRIL 19	Chisholm - <i>Human Freedom and the Self</i> van Inwagen - <i>the Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will</i>
WEEK 12	APRIL 22	APRIL 26	Hume - <i>Of Liberty and Necessity</i> Frankfurt - <i>Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility</i>
Module 7: Ethics and Values			
WEEK 13	APRIL 30	MAY 3	Bentham - <i>the Principle of Utility</i> Mill - <i>Utilitarianism</i>
WEEK 14	MAY 6	MAY 10	Kant - <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals</i> O'Neill - <i>Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems</i>
WEEK 15	MAY 13	MAY 18	Aristotle - <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Nagel - <i>Aristotle on Eudaimonia</i>