

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 – 12:00 in Ashe 713

Course Description. This course will introduce you to some basic philosophical questions about knowledge, mind, persons and freedom. These include:

- What is knowledge? How can I know about the world?
- What is it to be conscious? Is my mind just my brain?
- What sort of thing is a person? Can I survive the death of my body?
- What is it to act freely? Am I responsible for what I do?

The aim of the course is to give you practice in the sort of analysis and argumentation that philosophers engage in when they address these and other questions. The emphasis will be on analyzing problems, constructing and evaluating arguments, developing and defending theses.

Requirements and Grading. You will be graded on the basis of three things: 1) essays, 2) exams, and 3) participation.

1. Essays. You will write 2 papers. These should be around 1500 words in length. Topics will be announced in class. Due dates are below.
2. Exams. There will be 2 in class exams. The dates are below.
3. Participation. Though this is a lecture course, we will spend a lot of time having class discussions. Philosophers don't just read and write books and papers; they also talk to each other. Philosophical discussions are the most important and most enjoyable part of the discipline.

Your grade will be calculated as a weighted average of your essays, exams, and participation. The weights are: 30% for each paper, 15% for each exam, and 10% for participation.

Grading scale: 0-59% F, 60-62% D-, 63-66% D, 67-69% D+, 70-72% C-, 73-76% C, 77-79% C+, 80-82% B-, 83-86% B, 87-89% B+, 90-92% A-, 93-96% A, 97-100% A+.

Late Policy. Late essays will be penalized by half a letter grade per day late.

Texts. The following texts are required:

- René Descartes – Meditations on First Philosophy
- Bertrand Russell – Problems of Philosophy
- Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness
- John Perry – A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality

Robert Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will

I've ordered all the books through the university bookstore. The Descartes and Russell books, however, are now public domain.

Schedule. Read the material before the date listed.

August 26th: First Day

August 31st: Descartes – Meditations 1 and 2

September 2nd: Descartes – Meditations 2 and 3

September 7th: Descartes – Meditations 3 and 4

September 9th: Descartes – Meditations 5 and 6

September 14th: Finish Descartes' Meditations

September 16th: First Paper Due; Russell – Problems of Philosophy 1 and 2

September 21st: Russell – Problems of Philosophy 3, 4, and 5

September 23rd: Russell – Problems of Philosophy 6

September 28th: Russell – Problems of Philosophy 7 and 8

September 30th: Russell – Problems of Philosophy 9, 10, and 11

October 5th: First Exam

October 7th: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Monday Night

October 12th: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Tuesday Night

October 14th: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Wednesday Night

October 19th: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Thursday Night

October 21st: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Friday Night

October 26th: Alter and Howell – A Dialogue on Consciousness Saturday

October 28th: Second Paper Due; Perry – Dialogues on Personal Identity and Immortality 1

November 2nd: Perry – Dialogues on Personal Identity and Immortality 2

November 4th: Perry – Dialogues on Personal Identity and Immortality 3

November 9th: Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will 1 and 2

November 11th: Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will 3 and 4

November 16th: Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will 5 and 6

November 18th: Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will 7 and 8

November 23rd: Kane – A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will 9 and 10

November 30th: Second Exam

December 2nd: Last Day