

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 1001

Spring 2018

Section 001 - MW 1:10-2:25pm, 323 Milbank Hall

Section 002 - MW 2:40-3:55pm, 323 Milbank Hall

PROFESSOR

Dr. Elliot Samuel Paul

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of this course is two-fold:

- to familiarize you with some of the central issues in Western philosophy, with some of the positions philosophers have taken on these issues, and with some of the arguments that have been offered for and against these positions.
- to equip you with critical reasoning skills that will enable you to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a given argument and to reason through an issue to decide on your own point of view. These are skills that you can apply well beyond philosophy to any issue that calls for rational assessment.

The course is divided into five units. Drawing on both classical and contemporary sources we will address questions such as these:

- Unit 1 – RELIGIOUS BELIEF: If God exists, how are we to understand the presence of evil and suffering in the world? Is it rational to believe in God, and if so, how?
- Unit 2 – EPISTEMOLOGY: What is knowledge? How much do we really know?
- Unit 3 – MIND & BODY: Is the mind part of the physical world? If so, how?
- Unit 4 – FREE WILL: Do we have free will? Does moral responsibility depend on free will?
- Unit 5 – ETHICS & SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY: What determines whether an action is morally right or wrong? To what extent are we morally obligated to help the poor? What is racism? What is the meaning of life?

TEXTBOOK

The Elements of Philosophy, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler, Susanna Siegel and Steven M. Cahn, Oxford 2007.

This book can be purchased at Book Culture on 112th Street or through an online vendor like Amazon. Additional readings will be available on Courseworks [C].

REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

- (1) *1st Paper: 20%*
(900-1000 words)
- (2) *Midterm Exam 20%*
- (3) *2nd Paper: 30%*
(1200-1500 words)
- (4) *Final Exam: 30%*

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and is only excused in the case of documented medical emergencies (with a note from a doctor or your dean) or religious holidays (please tell me as soon as possible if this applies to you). You are allowed three unexcused absences throughout the term. After that, there will be a 2% deduction to your final grade for each lecture you miss. *Participation in class discussion is highly encouraged and may improve your grade in borderline cases.*

Academic Honesty

All requirements are to be fulfilled in accordance with the Barnard Honor Code (see <http://barnard.edu/dos/honor-code>). If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, see: <http://library.barnard.edu/find-books/guides/plagiarism>

Technology Policy

You are welcome to use electronic devices in class **for note-taking purposes only**. Surfing the web, playing games, doing email, or other tasks unrelated to the lecture undermines your ability to absorb and understand the material, it prevents you from participating in class discussion, and it's distracting to your fellow students ([see here](#)). If I see you using devices inappropriately, you'll be banned from using them in class.

Email Policy

Email is a convenient way to exchange relatively short messages, but it's no substitute for live philosophical dialogue. If you have substantive questions about the course material, it's best to see come and see me during office hours or by appointment so we can converse in real time.

SCHEDULE

- This is a provisional schedule, which may be revised according to the interests of the class and the rate at which we are progressing. Any changes will be announced both in class and by email, and be reflected in updated syllabi on Courseworks.
- All readings are from the textbook, except those with a web link or "[C]" for Courseworks.
- All materials on the Courseworks page, including the syllabus and assignments, are under "Files and Resources."
- I will *sometimes* display notes on the overhead projector during lecture, and when I do I will post them to Courseworks afterward. They are in Word, rather than Power Point, to make it easy for you to type in your own annotations, print them, etc. You should not rely on them exclusively, however, because (a) you will not know in advance whether I will be using one for any given class, and (b) even when I do, it won't contain everything you need to know to do well on papers and exams. It is therefore crucial that you do the readings and attend lectures. (Recall attendance policy above.)

		Date	Topic & Readings	Deadlines
	1.	1/17	Introduction	
	2.	1/22	A Little Logic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James & Stuart Rachels, <i>How to Evaluate Arguments</i> [C] • Perry et al., <i>On the Study of Philosophy</i> [C] • Jim Pryor, <i>Guidelines on Reading Philosophy</i> (http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html) 	
Unit 1	3.	1/24	The Problem of Evil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Hick, <i>The Problem of Evil</i> 	
	4.	1/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louise Antony, <i>For the Love of Reason</i> [C] 	

	5.	1/31	Pascal's Wager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blaise Pascal, <i>The Wager</i> William Lycan & George Schlesinger, <i>You Bet Your Life: Pascal's Wager Defended</i> [C] 	
	6.	2/5	Rationality & Belief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> W.K. Clifford, <i>The Ethics of Belief</i> William James, <i>The Will to Believe</i> 	
Unit 2	7.	2/7	Skepticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descartes, <i>Meditation 1</i>, pp. 351-354 Jim Pryor, <i>Descartes's First Meditation</i> [C] 	
	8.	2/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christopher Grau "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and <i>The Matrix</i>" [C] 	
	9.	2/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descartes, <i>Meditation 2</i>, pp. 354-358 	
	10.	2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G. E. Moore, <i>Proof of an External World</i> G. E. Moore, <i>Certainty</i> 	
	11.	2/21	Implicit Bias <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jennifer Saul, TBA [C] 	
	12.	2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamar Gendler, "On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias"[C] 	
	13.	2/28	*** MIDTERM EXAM ***	
Unit 3	14.	3/5	Artificial Intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamar Gendler et al., <i>Mind</i>, pp. 549-52 John Searle, <i>Can Computers Think?</i> Optional: Listen to Radiolab, <i>Talking to Machines</i> http://www.radiolab.org/story/137407-talking-to-machines/ 	
	15.	3/7	Consciousness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Nagel, <i>What is It Like to Be a Bat</i> Frank Jackson, <i>What Mary Didn't Know</i> [C] Optional: Gary Gutting, <i>Mary and the Zombies: Can Science Explain Consciousness?</i> [C] Optional: Terry Bisson, <i>They're Made of Meat</i> http://www.terrybisson.com/page6/page6.html 	
	16.	3/19	Dualism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descartes, <i>Meditation 6</i>, pp. 553-60 Swinburne, <i>A Defense of Substance Dualism</i> [C] 	
	17.	3/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (in correspondence with Descartes) [C] 	1st Paper due at beginning of class
	18.	3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Carruthers, <i>The Case for Physicalism</i> [C] 	

Unit 4	19.	3/28	The Denial of Free Will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James & Stuart Rachels, CH 8 The Case Against Free Will [C] Derk Pereboom, A Defense of Free Will Skepticism [C] Daniel Wegner, The Mind's Best Trick: how we experience conscious will [C] 	
	20.	4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Wolf, <i>Sanity and the Metaphysics of Moral Responsibility</i> [C] 	
	21.	4/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Nagel, <i>Moral Luck</i> [C] 	
Unit 5	22.	4/9	Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachels & Rachels, <i>The Debate over Utilitarianism</i> [C] Robert Nozick, <i>The Experience Machine</i> [C] 	
	23.	4/11	Deontology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (selections) Christine Korsgaard, <i>Introduction to Kant's Groundwork</i> [C] 	
	24.	4/16	Puzzling Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judith Jarvis Thomson, <i>The Trolley Problem</i> 	2nd Paper Due at beginning of class
	25.	4/18	Moral Duties to the Poor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Singer, <i>Rich and Poor</i> 	
	26.	4/23	Racism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linda Martin Alcoff, <i>What is Racism?</i> [C] 	
	27.	4/30	The Meaning of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Susan Wolf, <i>The Meanings of Lives</i> [C] 	

The final exam will be scheduled by the Registrar.