

PHI 107: Theories of Knowledge and Reality: Self, World, God
Fall 2015

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: We will be primarily concerned with questions about the self (What am I? Under what conditions will I continue to exist?), questions about the world (What does it take for various objects make up of some larger object? Are the laws of nature deterministic? Do we have free will?), and questions about God (Does God exist? Is God's existence compatible with the existence of suffering?). You will learn to give a clear statement of a philosophical theory, to extract a clear statement of an argument from a philosophical text, and to explain and evaluate an argument.

READINGS: The only required book is Alyssa Ney's *Metaphysics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2014). I've also ordered copies at the SU bookstore.

All other readings will be made available electronically. You are expected to print out them out promptly, study them carefully, and mark them up extensively.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: You will write two short (1,000 word) papers, each worth 25% of your final grade.

There will also be eight homework assignments. These will generally be handed out at the end of class on Tuesday and will be due at the beginning of class the following Tuesday. Your five highest will be worth 30%.

You will also answer short questions about the reading and write up brief responses to issues discussed in class. Reading questions will be posted on Blackboard before the reading is due. Answers are due by email at 9:00 PM the night before the reading is due. You must answer five sets of questions. Your five highest will be worth 10%. Our class discussions will often go beyond the readings. Someone will no doubt suggest something (perhaps a view, an objection to a view, or a reply to an objection) that you do not accept. You should explain your reasons for not accepting this view, objection, or reply. Your five highest responses will be worth 10%.

Everything must be turned in on time. **Late work will not be accepted.** There will be no extra credit assignments.

You are required to come to class. There are twenty seven class periods (excluding the first day). For every 10% of these class periods that you miss without a documented justification, you will receive a 2.5% deduction from your final grade.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: You are expected to come prepared to each class, to be on time, and to stay for the duration of the class period. If you must enter late or leave early, please do so unobtrusively. Please silence your cell phones. **Do not use any electronic devices (such as laptops, ipods, ipads, or cell phones) during class.** If you are caught texting or otherwise playing on your cell phone, you will be given a warning; if you are caught again, you will be marked absent.

HELP: Philosophy is hard, but help is available. You might find some of the readings difficult and some of the material confusing. If you find yourself struggling with something you do not understand or if you just want to discuss something further, please do not hesitate to let me know. I will be more than happy to help you. Don't wait for a bad grade on a paper. If you seek help, you will get it.

TUTORING: Syracuse University is committed to your success. To that end, there are several tutoring centers on campus, including the Tutoring & Study Center (TSC), the Writing Center, and the Athletics Academic Services Center. I encourage you to use these services. All schedules and locations are posted on the TSC website: <http://tutoring.syr.edu>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures on the University's website at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

The *minimum* penalty for an academic integrity violation in this course is a zero on the assignment or paper in question. A report will then be sent to the Academic Integrity Office. If you are not sure whether what you are doing constitutes a violation of academic integrity, please ask me immediately.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review these accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: If you need to miss a class due to a religious observance, you will be entitled to makeup opportunities if (but only if) you provide notice by the end of the second week of classes (September 14th). You must do so through MySlice.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION): Please complete all the readings before the class periods indicated below. (If there are no readings listed on a given day, there are no new readings due that day.) All the additional readings for the course will be made available in the “Readings” section of the Blackboard website. I will also post more detailed information about the readings, some questions to think about, and various suggestions for further reading there as well. You can find the Blackboard website at: <http://bbgroupa.syr.edu/>.

Unit I: Self

- Tues, 9/1 General Introduction
- Thurs, 9/3 Introduction to Personal Identity/ Arguments and Logic
 John Locke, “On Identity and Difference” (sections 1-15)
- Tues, 9/8 Personal Identity: The Soul Theory
- Thurs, 9/10 Personal Identity: The Body Theory
- Tues, 9/15 Personal Identity: Lockean Theories
 Locke, “On Identity and Difference” (sections 9, 16-29)
- Thurs, 9/17 Personal Identity: Lockean Theories (continued)

Unit II: World

- Tues, 9/22 Material Objects: The Ship of Theseus Paradox
 Alyssa Ney, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 3: “Material Objects” (pp. 89-103)
- Thurs, 9/24 Material Objects: The Puzzle of the Statue and the Clay
- Tues, 9/29 Material Objects: The Special Composition Question
 Ney, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 3: “Material Objects” (pp. 103-110)
- Thurs, 10/1 Material Objects: Moderate Answers to the Special Composition Question
- Tues, 10/6 Material Objects: Nihilism and Universalism
 Ney, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 3: “Material Objects” (pp. 110-118)
- Thurs, 10/8 Material Objects: Nihilism and Universalism (continued)
- Tues, 10/13 Free Will: What is Determinism?
- Thurs, 10/15 Free Will: Is Determinism Incompatible with Free Will?
- Tues, 10/20 Free Will: Libertarianism
 Robert Kane, “Libertarianism” (pp. 5-10, 22-28)
- Thurs, 10/22 Free Will: Libertarianism (continued)

- Tues, 10/27 Free Will: Compatibilism
First paper due
- Thurs, 10/29 Free Will: Compatibilism (continued)
John Martin Fisher, "Compatibilism" (pp. 44-59)
- Tues, 11/3 Free Will: Hard Incompatibilism
Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism" (pp. 85-87, 93-98, 101-110, 114-118)
- Thurs, 11/5 Free Will: Hard Incompatibilism (continued)

Unit III: God

- Tues, 11/10 God: Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
* Peter van Inwagen, "The Idea of God"
- Thurs, 11/12 God: The Teleological Argument
William Paley, *Natural Theology* (pp. 7-15, 35-36)
- Tues, 11/17 God: The Teleological Argument (continued)
- Thurs, 11/19 God: The Teleological Argument (continued)
* Roger White, "Does Origins of Life Research Rest on a Mistake?"
- [Tues, 11/24 & Thurs, 11/26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class]
- Tues, 12/1 God: The Ontological Argument
Anselm, *Proslogion* 2-3
Gary Matthews, "The Ontological Argument" (pp. 81-95)
- Thurs, 12/3 God: The Problem of Evil
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part 10 (pp. 68-77)
- Tues, 12/8 God: The Problem of Evil (continued)
Andrea Weisberger, "The Argument from Evil"
- Thurs, 12/10 God: The Problem of Evil (continued)
David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?" (pp. 149-155)
- Fri, 12/18 **Second Paper due by 2:45 PM**