

**PHI 107 (M001): Theories of Knowledge and Reality**  
Fall 2019

Instructor: Byron Simmons  
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Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:00 PM, or by appointment, in Bird Library café.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will serve as an introduction to some of the main issues, theories, and arguments in the areas of philosophy concerned with knowledge (epistemology) and reality (metaphysics). We will be primarily concerned with the following questions:

1. What is knowledge?
2. What is the relation between the mind and the body?
3. Do we have free will?
4. Does God exist?
5. Is time travel possible?

The goal is to improve your ability to think carefully about abstract topics, while subjecting your most deeply held beliefs to philosophical scrutiny.

**TEXTS:** You are not required to buy a textbook for this course. All the required readings will be made available electronically. You are expected to print out them out promptly, study them carefully, and mark them up extensively.

Note that this course will be **reading-intensive**. The absence of a textbook should *not* be interpreted to imply that the reading is optional. The readings provide context that will be necessary for success on the exams and the papers; you may be tested on content from the readings which is not discussed in class. I reserve the right to administer surprise quizzes on the readings to verify that you are completing them.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** There will two exams, two papers, and some short homework assignments. Note that this course is designated by the University as **writing-intensive**. This means that the University imposes requirements as to how many written assignments are to be given in this course. Your course grade will be determined by the following percentages:

First Paper = 10%  
Second Paper = 20%  
Midterm Exam = 20%  
Final Exam = 20%  
Short Writing Assignments = 20%  
Attendance & Participation = 10%

**Attendance is required.** You will not be able to do well in this class unless you come to class.

Absences will only be excused for legitimate reasons (such as personal emergencies, religious holidays, health problems, etc.). If you know that you will be absent for any reason, you should inform me (via email) as soon as possible.

**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.** Doing so will negatively affect your participation grade. If you require the use of an electronic device, then you must provide me with a note from the relevant authority (e.g. the Office of Disability Services).

**MISSED EXAMS:** If you know that you are going to miss an exam, you must provide me with a documented justification beforehand. You will then take a makeup. No makeups are permitted without an approved justification.

**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 or an exam. 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 exam, assignment, or quiz in question. A report will then be sent to the Academic Integrity Office.

**Don't cheat. Seriously, don't do it.** I have a zero-tolerance policy for violations of academic integrity, and will report violations to the University without exception.

However, I am generally quite understanding of the various problems that can make it difficult to turn in an assignment on time. If you find yourself having difficulty meeting an assignment deadline, then **contact me and let me know about the problem instead of plagiarizing to meet the deadline.** It is much better to turn in an assignment late than to plagiarize in order to get it in on time.

**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 (Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>). You must do so through MySlice. For more information on this policy, see [http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm).

**TENATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION):** All the readings will be made available in the "Readings" section of the Blackboard website: <http://bbgroupa.syr.edu/>. (\* = optional reading)

### **Introduction**

Tues, 8/27 Course Introduction

Thurs, 8/29 Truth and Falsehood  
Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 12

### **Unit I: Knowledge**

Tues, 9/3 Justification Requires Certainty  
René Descartes, *Meditation I*

Thurs, 9/5 Justified True Belief is Not Sufficient for Knowledge  
Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"  
Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"  
**First Short Assignment Due**

### **Unit II: Mind-Body**

Tues, 9/10 Introduction  
\* Peter van Inwagen, "The Nature of Rational Beings: Dualism and Physicalism"

Thurs, 9/12 Dualism  
Descartes, *Meditations* II and VI

Tues, 9/17 Dualism: The Problem of Other Minds  
**Second Short Writing Assignment Due**

Thurs, 9/19 Dualism: The Problem of Causal Interaction  
Princes Elizabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence with Descartes*

Tues, 9/24 Identity Theory  
J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"

Thurs, 9/26 Interlude: Can Machines Think?  
Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

Tues, 10/1      Functionalism  
                         Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"  
                         Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"

### **Unit III: Free Will**

Thurs, 10/3      Introduction  
                         \* van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will"  
                         **First Paper due**

Tues, 10/8      Libertarianism  
                         Robert Kane, "Libertarianism"

Thurs, 10/10     Compatibilism  
                         R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable Without It"

Tues, 10/15     Compatibilism (continued) & Hard Determinism  
                         Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"  
                         \* Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism"  
                         **Third Short Writing Assignment Due**

Thurs, 10/17     **Midterm Exam**

### **Unit IV: God**

Tues, 10/22     Introduction  
                         \* van Inwagen, "The Idea of God"

Thurs, 10/24     The Cosmological Argument  
                         \* Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* [selections]  
                         William Lane Craig, "The Kalam Cosmological Argument"  
                         G.W. Leibniz, *On the Ultimate Origination of Things & Monadology*

Tues, 10/29     The Teleological Argument  
                         \* William Paley, *Natural Theology* [selections]  
                         Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument"

Thurs, 10/31     The Teleological Argument (continued)

Tues, 11/5      The Ontological Argument  
                         Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion 2*  
                         \* Gary Matthews, "The Ontological Argument", pp. 81-95  
                         \* Gaunilo, *Reply on Behalf of the Fool*

Thurs, 11/7      Pascal's Wager  
                         Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* [selections]  
                         \* Alan Hájek, "Pascal's Wager"  
                         **Fourth Short Writing Assignment Due**

Tues, 11/12     The Problem of Evil  
                         \* David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* [selections]  
                         Louise M. Antony, "For the Love of Reason"

Thurs, 11/14 The Problem of Evil (continued)  
Andrea Weisberger, "The Argument from Evil"

Tues, 11/19 The Problem of Evil (continued)  
\* David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?"  
**Fifth Short Writing Assignment Due**

Thurs, 11/21 The Problem of Hell  
\* Lewis, "Divine Evil"

[Tues, 11/26 & Thurs, 11/28 – THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class]

### **Unit V: Time Travel**

Tues, 12/3 The Paradoxes of Time Travel  
Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"

Thurs, 12/5 The Paradoxes of Time Travel (continued)  
\*Robert Heinlein, "By His Bootstraps"

Sun, 12/8 **Review Session at 12:00 noon-2:00 PM**  
**Second paper due**

Thurs, 12/12 **Final Exam at 3:00-5:00 PM**

### **CHRONOLOGY:**

1077-78 Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*

Gaunilo, *A Reply to the Foregoing By a Certain Writer on Behalf of the Fool*

1091-95 Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*

1641 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

1643 Princes Elizabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence with Descartes*

1670 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

1697 G. W. Leibniz, *On the Ultimate Origination of Things*

1714 G. W. Leibniz, *The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology*

1779 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

1802 William Paley, *Natural Theology*

1912 Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*

- 1934 R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable Without It"
- 1941 Robert Heinlein, "By His Bootstraps"
- 1950 Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"
- 1959 J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"
- 1963 Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
- 1967 Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"
- 1976 David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel"
- 1986 Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"
- 1987 Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"
- 1993 David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?"
- 1994 Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems"
- 2005 Gary Matthews, "The Ontological Argument"
- 2006 Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil*
- 2007 Robert Kane, "Libertarianism"
- Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism"
- Louise Antony, "For the Love of Reason"
- Andrea Weisberger, "The Argument from Evil"
- David Lewis, "Divine Evil"
- 2008 Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument"
- 2014 Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition