

PHI 107: Theories of Knowledge and Reality: Self, World, God
Spring 2016

Instructor: Byron Simmons
Office hours: Tues 10:00-12:00 (in Bird Library café) and by appointment
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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* (Is there an external world? 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 position, to extract a clear statement of an argument from a philosophical text, and to explain and evaluate an argument.

TEXTS: All the required readings for this class will be made available electronically. You are expected to print out them out promptly, study them carefully, and mark them up extensively.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: (1) You will write two short (1,000 word) papers, each worth 20% of your raw final grade.

(2) There will be two in-class exams (dates on the schedule below), each worth 15%.

(3) 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 20%.

(4) You will also answer some short sets of questions about the reading, which will be posted on Blackboard together with the readings. Your answers to these questions will be due at the beginning of class on the day the reading is due. You must answer five sets of questions. Your five highest 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. If you miss three or more non-exam class periods without a documented justification, then you will receive only a fraction of your raw final grade. There are twenty six such 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.

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.

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 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 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 (Jan. 29th). You must do so through MySlice.

TENATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION): Please complete all the readings before the class periods indicated below. They will be made available in the “Readings” section of the Blackboard website: <http://bbgroupa.syr.edu/>.

* indicates an optional reading, ** indicates further, extremely optional reading

Unit I: Self

- Tues, 1/19 General Introduction
- Thurs, 1/21 Personal Immortality, Arguments and Logic
- Tues, 1/26 Introduction to Personal Identity
 John Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality” (pp. 322-324)
- Thurs, 1/28 Personal Identity: The Soul Theory
 Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality” (pp. 324-329)
 ** Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (pp. 126-137)
- Tues, 2/2 Personal Identity: The Body Theory
 Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality” (pp. 329-330)
 * John Locke, “On Identity and Difference” (sections 1-15)
 ** Peter van Inwagen, “I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead...” (pp. 1-9)
- Thurs, 2/4 Personal Identity: Lockean Theories
 Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality” (pp. 330-336)
 * Locke, “On Identity and Difference” (sections 9, 16-29)
 ** Nicholas Jolley, *Locke’s Touchy Subjects* (Chapter 7)
- Tues, 2/9 **First Exam**

Unit II: World

- Thurs, 2/11 Skepticism: Introduction to Knowledge and Skepticism
- Tues, 2/16 Skepticism: The Argument for Skepticism
 René Descartes, *Meditation I* (pp. 12-15)
 ** John Pollock and Joseph Cruz, “Skeptical Problems” (pp. 2-6)
- Thurs, 2/18 Skepticism: The Argument for Skepticism (continued)
 Descartes, *Meditation II* (pp. 16-19)
- Tues, 2/23 Skepticism: The Problem of the External World
 Hilary Putnam, “Brains in a Vat” (pp. 5-8, 12-17)
 ** Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (pp. 71-74)
- Thurs, 2/25 Skepticism: The Problem of the External World (continued)
 Gail Stine, “Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure”
- Tues, 3/1 Free Will: What is Determinism?

Thurs, 3/3 Free Will: Is Determinism Incompatible with Free Will?

Tues, 3/8 Free Will: Libertarianism
Robert Kane, "Libertarianism"

Thurs, 3/10 Free Will: Libertarianism (continued)
First Paper Due

[Tues, 3/15 & Thurs, 3/17 – SPRING BREAK – No Class]

Tues, 3/22 Free Will: Libertarianism (continued)

Thurs, 3/24 Free Will: Compatibilism
John Martin Fischer, "Compatibilism"

Tues, 3/29 Free Will: Compatibilism (continued)

Thurs, 3/31 Free Will: Hard Determinism
Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism"

Tues, 4/5 **Second Exam**

Unit III: God

Thurs, 4/7 God: Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
* van Inwagen, "The Idea of God"

Tues, 4/12 God: The Teleological Argument
William Paley, *Natural Theology* [excerpt]

Thurs, 4/14 God: The Teleological Argument (continued)
Elliott Sober, "The Design Argument" (pp. 117-119, 126-132)

Tues, 4/19 God: The Teleological Argument (continued)
Sober, "The Design Argument" (pp. 133-140)
** Roger White, "Does Origins of Life Research Rest on a Mistake?"

Thurs, 4/21 God: The Ontological Argument
Anselm, *Proslogion 2*
Gary Matthews, "The Ontological Argument"

Tues, 4/26 God: The Problem of Evil
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* [excerpt]

Thurs, 4/28 God: The Problem of Evil (continued)
Andrea Weisberger, "The Argument from Evil"

Tues, 5/3 God: The Free Will Defense
David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?" [excerpt]

Fri, 5/6 Final Paper due (by 12:15 PM in HL 541)