

PHI 107 (M105): Theories of Knowledge and Reality
Spring 2020

Instructor: Byron Simmons

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Class: MWF 10:35-11:30 AM in Lyman Hall 115

Office hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00 PM, or by appointment, in Bowne Hall 103

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 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?

COURSE GOALS: The primary goal of this course is to improve your ability to think carefully about abstract topics, while subjecting your most deeply held beliefs to philosophical scrutiny. By the end of this course, you will have developed the following skills:

- The ability to identify the structure of arguments—identifying their premises, conclusion, and logical form—and to present them in premise-conclusion form.
- The ability to provide focused objections to arguments, which concentrate either on a particular premise or on a particular inference in the argument's structure and suggest reasons to doubt that premise or inference.
- The ability to analyze the strength of different objections to an argument, thinking about how an objection works, how central to the argument the point being challenged by the objection is, and how easy it would be to modify the argument so as to avoid the objection.
- The ability to rationally defend a philosophical position, by explaining and then presenting valid arguments in favor of each of its central tenets, and identifying and responding to potential objections to it.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: There will be 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. There are 500 total points available in this course. These points break down according to the following percentages:

First Paper = 10%

Second Paper = 20%

Midterm Exam = 20%

Final Exam = 20%

Short Writing Assignments = 20%

Attendance & Participation = 10%

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is required. You will not be able to do well in this class unless you come to class. **A maximum of 5 unexcused absences are allowed.**

6 unexcused absences will lower your course grade 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B).
7 unexcused absences will lower your course grade 2/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B-).
8 unexcused absences will lower your course grade a full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to C+).
9 or more unexcused absences will lead to an F in the course.

Absences will only be excused for legitimate reasons (such as participation in intercollegiate athletic competitions, religious holidays, health problems, personal emergencies, 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, headphones, earbuds, cell phones, etc.) 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).

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.

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. 24th). You must do so through MySlice. For more information on this policy, see 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

Mon, 1/13 Course Introduction

Wed, 1/15 Truth and Falsehood
 Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 12

Unit I: Knowledge

Fri, 1/17 Introduction

[Mon, 1/20 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY – No Class]

Wed, 1/22 Justification Requires Certainty
 René Descartes, *Meditation I*

Fri, 1/24 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

- Mon, 1/27 Introduction
 * Peter van Inwagen, "The Nature of Rational Beings: Dualism and Physicalism"
- Wed, 1/29 Dualism
 Descartes, *Meditations* II and VI
- Fri, 1/31 Dualism: The Problem of Other Minds
 Second Writing Assignment Due
- Mon, 2/3 Dualism: The Problem of Causal Interaction
 Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, *Correspondence with Descartes*
- Wed, 2/5 Identity Theory
 J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"
- [Fri, 2/7 SNOW DAY – No Class]
- Mon, 2/10 Identity Theory (continued)
 Third Short Writing Assignment Due
- Wed, 2/12 Interlude: Can Machines Think?
 Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"
 "The Measure of a Man" (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Season 2, Episode 9)
- Fri, 2/14 Functionalism
 Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"
- Mon, 2/17 Dualism Strikes Back
 Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"

Unit III: Free Will

- Wed, 2/19 Introduction
 * van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will"
 First Paper due
- Fri, 2/21 The Consequence Argument
- Mon, 2/24 Libertarianism
 Robert Kane, "Libertarianism"
- Wed, 2/26 Libertarianism (continued)
- Fri, 2/28 Compatibilism
 R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determinism and Inconceivable Without It"
- Mon, 3/2 Compatibilism (continued)
 Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"

Wed, 3/4 Compatibilism (continued)
 Fourth Short Writing Assignment Due

Fri, 3/6 Hard Determinism
 Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism"

Unit IV: God

Mon, 3/9 Introduction
 * van Inwagen, "The Idea of God"

Wed, 3/11 The Cosmological Argument
 * Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* [selections]
 William Lane Craig, "The *Kalam* Cosmological Argument"

Fri, 3/13 **Midterm Exam**

[Mon, 3/16 & Wed, 3/18 & Fri, 3/20 – SPRING BREAK – No Class]

Sun, 3/22 The Teleological Argument: Part 1 – Three Cases (29:51)
 * William Paley, *Natural Theology* [selections]

Mon, 3/23 The Teleological Argument: Part 2 – The Watch Argument (18:43)

Tues, 3/24 The Teleological Argument: Part 3 – The Fine-Tuning Argument (41:40)
 Robin Collins, "The Teleological Argument"

Wed, 3/25 The Teleological Argument: Part 4 – The Anthropic Response (31:56)
 Fifth Short Writing Assignment

Thurs, 3/26 The Teleological Argument: Part 5 – Swinburne's Reply (26:39)

Fri, 3/27 The Teleological Argument: Part 6 – The Many Universes Objection (23:13)

Sat, 3/28 The Teleological Argument: Part 7 – The Intentions of the Designer Objection (18:23)

Sun, 3/29 The Teleological Argument: Part 8 – The "It Doesn't Get You God" Objection (17:55)

Mon, 3/30 The Ontological Argument: Part 1 – *Reductio ad Absurdum* (22:16)

Tues, 3/31 The Ontological Argument: Part 2 – Anselm's Argument (26:35)
 Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion 2*

Wed, 4/1 The Ontological Argument: Part 3 – Objections and Replies (24:56)
 * Gary Matthews, "The Ontological Argument", pp. 81-95
 * Gaunilo, *Reply on Behalf of the Fool*

Thurs, 4/2 Pascal's Wager: Part 1 – Decision Theory (19:21)

Fri, 4/3	Pascal's Wager: Part 2 – Pascal's Argument (14:50) Blaise Pascal, <i>Pensées</i> [selections] Sixth Short Writing Assignment Due
Sat, 4/4	Pascal's Wager: Part 3 – Objections and Replies (22:12) * Alan Hájek, "Pascal's Wager"
Sun, 4/5	The Problem of Evil: Part 1 – A Tour of Evil (pdf)
Mon, 4/6	The Problem of Evil: Part 2 – The Argument from Evil (18:05) * David Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> [selections] Louise M. Antony, "For the Love of Reason"
Thurs, 4/9	The Problem of Evil: Part 3 – The Skeptical Theist's Response (29:48) Andrea Weisberger, "The Argument from Evil"
Fri, 4/10	The Problem of Evil: Part 4 – Outlining the Necessary Means Strategy (12:34) Seventh Short Writing Assignment Due
Sat, 4/11	The Problem of Evil: Part 5 – Implementing the Necessary Means Strategy (16:04)
Mon, 4/13	The Problem of Evil: Part 6 – The Soul-Making Defense (22:52)
Wed, 4/15	The Problem of Evil: Part 7 – The Free Will Defense (11:35) * David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?"
Thurs, 4/16	The Problem of Evil: Part 8 – Refining the Free Will Defense (17:08)
Fri, 4/17	The Problem of Evil: Part 9 – Evaluating the Free Will Defense (11:34)
Mon, 4/20	The Problem of Hell: Part 1 – The Traditional Doctrine of Hell (23:33)
Wed, 4/22	The Problem of Hell: Part 2 – Responses to the Problem of Hell (18:19) * Lewis, "Divine Evil"
Fri, 4/24	The Problem of Hell: Part 3 – Lewis's Contagion Thesis (16:57)
Mon, 4/27	Final online meeting
Wed, 5/6	Final Exam & Final Paper due by 10:00 AM EDT