

**Philosophy 230: Mind, Matter, and Metaphysics: The Philosophy of
Experience and Reality**
Fall 2019, UNC Chapel Hill

MWF 9:05am–9:55am
Greenlaw 302

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Office: Caldwell Hall 12B
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3.30pm-4.30pm
Fridays 10.00am-11.00am, or by appointment

Course Description

The course will be an introduction to some of the central issues in Epistemology, Metaphysics and Philosophy of Mind and will cover the following questions: Can we know that there is an external world? What is the relationship between your conscious mind and your brain? What makes you the same person that you were a year ago? What is the nature of time? Do people have free will? By the end of the course I hope that you will (1) have formed your own views about these questions and be able to support them with reasons, (2) be able to critically engage with an unfamiliar philosophical position or view, and (3) be able to clearly argue for a view that you hold.

Readings

All readings will be made available on Sakai.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Reading Responses: 30% (each response is worth 10%)
Short Papers: 30% (each paper is worth 15%)
Long Paper: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

Reading Responses:

For each of the first **four** units of the class you will be required to write a short (around 1 page) reading response about one of the readings that I will assign to you. The reading responses should pick out and explain one aspect or argument of that reading that you found interesting and critically respond to it. The purpose of this exercise is mainly for you to engage with an unfamiliar philosophical text and figure out the author's argument on your own and so they are **due at 8pm the day before** the class in which we will discuss the reading. I will distribute the reading response schedule after the first week of class. I will drop your lowest reading response grade.

Short Papers:

You will be required to write **two** short papers (2-3 papers) over the course of the semester. Like the reading responses, the short papers will ask you to summarize a philosophical view from the readings and critically respond to it. However, in the short papers you will be required to offer a fuller and more sophisticated critical evaluation of an author's view. At the beginning of each of the first four units I will distribute the paper prompts for this unit and the papers will be due one week after we have finished the unit (as indicated on the syllabus). You will choose which two of the four units you will write your papers on.

Long Paper:

You will be required to write **one** substantive paper (5-7 pages) that is due at the end of the semester (December 4th). I will distribute paper prompts that you can choose from, but you are also free to choose your own topic. However, if you choose your own topic you **must** discuss your proposed topic with me first and receive my approval. You can also use this option to expand any of your reading responses or short papers, but if you choose this option you will have to add some substantial new idea to your earlier paper.

Final Exam

The final exam will take place on Saturday, December 7th at 8.00am. It will consist of short answer questions that are designed to test your understanding of the main points discussed in the course.

Note: The required writing for this class will exceed 10 pages.

Due Dates and Late Policy

I am usually happy to grant **short** extensions for the reading responses or the short papers as long as you send me an email and explain your situation. However, keep in mind that in order to receive credit you will have to turn in your reading response before the class where we will be discussing the relevant reading. If you should suffer a serious and genuinely unforeseen medical or personal emergency and need a longer extension, that emergency has to be verified with the Dean of Students Office (<https://deanofstudents.unc.edu/>) first. Short papers that are more than three days late will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day that they are late, unless you were experiencing a serious and genuinely unforeseen medical or personal emergency, and only when the emergency can be verified with the Dean of Students Office.

The long paper is due on December 4th - late papers will be docked **one letter grade** for each day that it is late. Since this is the end of the class I won't be able to give you extensions for the paper, unless you were experiencing a serious and genuinely unforeseen medical or personal emergency, and only when the emergency can be verified with the Dean of Students Office.

The final exam will take place on December 8th. Any request to take the Midterm or the Final Exam at a time other than the scheduled time must likewise go through the Office of the Dean of Students (unless you have three or more exams scheduled within a 24 hour period).

Note: Please write your PID instead of your name on your papers and exams to allow for blind grading.

Accommodations

If you require reasonable accommodations for a documented disability, you must register with ARS (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>). Once I receive ARS's recommendations, I will be happy to work with you to implement them as appropriate.

Laptops

In my experience laptops are distracting both to you and the people around you, so laptops, phones, and other electronics are not permitted for use in the classroom. (Though if you have a valid reason for which you need to use a laptop, let me know. You are then of course permitted to use it.)

Outside Sources

Please do not refer to any academic sources other than the assigned readings in your papers. The one exception is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>), which is very useful for general background reading on philosophical terms and topics.

Plagiarism

The UNC Instrument of Student Governance defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” You are expected to abide by UNC’s Honor Code, and refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism. Just as you are bound by the Honor Code not to plagiarize, I am bound by it to report suspected cases of academic dishonesty of any kind to the Honor Court.

In your papers, you may use whichever standard citation convention that you’d like. But any words that you borrow from any external source must appear in quotation marks, and you must provide some sort of internal citation indicating where those words came from. It is also a form of plagiarism to closely paraphrase text from an external source without proper citation, changing a few of the words but imitating the structure of the external source.

In addition, please bear in mind that plagiarism can be committed non-deliberately; if you are reckless in your use of other people’s words or ideas, then you have committed plagiarism even if you didn’t mean to do so. If you have any questions at all about proper citation of other people’s words or ideas in the course, please don’t hesitate to come talk to me about them. You are responsible for knowing what exactly counts as plagiarism and to not commit it in your papers.

(Note: This Syllabus is still provisional and subject to change.)

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Introduction

Wednesday, August 21st — Course Introduction

No reading

Friday, August 23rd — Skill Day 1: Arguments

Watch Pynn’s “Critical Thinking - Fundamentals: Introduction to Critical Thinking”

Watch Pynn’s “Critical Thinking - Fundamentals: Deductive Arguments”

Week 2 – Unit 1: Skepticism

Monday, August 26th — Could we fail to have knowledge about the external world?
Watch Nagel's "Epistemology: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge"
Read Descartes's *Meditations* (Read only Meditation 1)

Wednesday, August 28th — Responses to Skepticism: Moore
Read Moore's "Proof of an external world" (focus on pages 165-170)
Optional: Read Moore's "On Certainty"

Friday, August 30th — Skill Day 2: Reading Responses
No reading

Week 3 – Unit 1: Skepticism

Monday, September 2nd — Labor Day Holiday (no class)

Wednesday September 4th — Responses to Skepticism: Semantic Externalism
Read Putnam's "Brains in a vat"

Friday, September 6th — Responses to Skepticism: Inference to the best explanation
Read Vogel's "Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the best explanation"

Week 4 - Unit 1: Skepticism

Monday, September 9th — Responses to Skepticism: Skepticism is incoherent
Read Rinard's "Reasoning one's way out of skepticism"

Wednesday, September 11th — Another skeptical argument
Read Bostrom's "The Simulation Argument: Why the probability that you are living in the matrix is quite high"

Friday, September 13th — Catch up/Skill Day
No Reading

Week 5 – Unit 2: Consciousness

Monday, September 16th — Descartes's Dualism
Read Descartes's *Meditations* (Read *Meditations* 2 and 6)
Read Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elizabeth (Selections)

Wednesday, September 18th — Identity Theory: The mind is the brain
Read: Place's "Is consciousness a brain process?"

Friday, September 20th — Catch up/Skill Day
No Reading.
Skepticism paper due.

Week 6 — Unit 2: Consciousness

Monday, September 23rd — Functionalism
Read Putnam's "The nature of mental states"

Wednesday, September 25th — Epiphenomenalism
Read Jackson's "Epiphenomenal Qualia"

Friday, September 27th — Catch up/Skill Day
No reading

Week 7 — Unit 2: Consciousness

Monday, September 30th — Dualism
Read Chalmers' "Facing up to the problem of consciousness"

Wednesday, October 2nd — Are there any qualia at all?
Read Dennett's "Quining qualia"

Friday, October 4th — Catch up/Skill Day
No reading

Week 8 — Unit 3: Personal Identity

Monday, October 7th — The psychological criterion
Read Locke's "The Prince and the Cobbler"

Wednesday, October 9th — Psychological Continuity and Bodily Continuity
Read Sider's "Personal Identity"

Friday, October 11th — Catch up/Skill day
No reading.
Consciousness paper due.

Week 9 - Unit 3: Personal Identity

Monday, October 14th — Psychological Continuity and Bodily Continuity
No reading.

Wednesday, October 16th — Personal Identity is not what matters
Read Parfit's "Personal Identity"

Friday, October 18th — Fall Break (no classes)

Week 10 - Unit 3: Personal Identity

Monday, October 21st — Personal Identity is not what matters
No reading.

Wednesday, October 23rd — Personal identity is what matters
Read Lewis's "Survival and Identity"

Friday, October 25th — Catch up/Skill day
No reading.

Week 11 - Unit 4: The nature of time

Monday, October 28th — A-Theory and B-Theory of Time
Read McTaggart's "Unreality of Time"

Wednesday, October 30th — A defense of the A-Theory
Read Zimmerman's "The privileged present: Presenting an A-Theory of time"

Friday, November 1st — Catch up/Skill day
No reading.

Personal Identity paper due.

Week 12 - Unit 4: The nature of time

Monday, November 4th — A defense of the B-Theory
Read Smart's "The tenseless theory of time"

Wednesday, November 6th — The passage of time
Read Markosian's "How fast does time pass?"

Friday, November 8th — Catch up
No reading.

Week 13 - Unit 4: The nature of time

Monday, November 11th — Temporal experience in the B-Theory
Read Paul's "Temporal Experience"

Wednesday, November 13th — Is time-travel possible?
Read Lewis's "Paradoxes of Time travel"

Friday, November 15th — Catch up/Skill day
No reading.

Week 14 - Unit 5: Free Will and Determinism

Monday, November 18th — Free will without determinism
Read Chisholm's "Human freedom and the self"

Wednesday, November 20th — Compatibilism
Read Frankfurt's "Freedom of the will and the concept of person"

Friday, November 22nd — Catch up
No reading.
The nature of time paper due.

Week 15 - Unit 5: Free Will and Determinism

Monday, November 25th — Incompatibilism without moral responsibility
Read Strawson's "The impossibility of ultimate moral responsibility"

Wednesday, November 27th — Thanksgiving (No classes)

Friday, November 29th — Thanksgiving (No classes)

Week 16 - Unit 5: Free Will and Determinism

Monday, December 2nd — Free will is compatible with determinism for *right* actions
Read Wolf's "Asymmetrical Freedom"

Wednesday, December 4th — Review/Wrap up
Long paper due.

Saturday, December 7th — **Final exam at 8am**