

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy
Summer II 2020, UNC Chapel Hill

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Office Hours: Fridays 1pm-3pm, or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to some of the main problems in Philosophy. We will study (among other things) such questions as: Can we know that there is an external world? Why does the universe exist? Can human life be meaningful? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? What makes a certain action good? Do we have free will? Besides introducing you to some of the main topics of contemporary (and historical) philosophy, this course also aims to teach you to read, write, and think philosophically.

Readings

All readings will be made available on Sakai.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Short Papers: 40% (each paper is worth 20%)
Reading Responses: 20% (each reading response is worth 5%)
Forum Participation: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

Short Papers:

Twice during the semester you will be required to write a short paper on one of the readings that we have done. These papers are supposed to be around 3 pages long and should be submitted on the days indicated on the syllabus. I will distribute prompts for them a week in advance.

Reading Responses:

You will be required to submit **four** reading responses over the course of the semester to readings that I will assign to you. The reading responses should explain the main ideas behind a day's reading and raise some questions or objections that you'd like to discuss more. The reading responses should be around 1 page long and they are **due at 8.00am** on the day for which the reading you are responding to is scheduled on the syllabus. I will distribute the reading reaction schedule on the first day of class.

Forum Participation

I will assign you to one of 5 groups. Each group has their own discussion form in which they will discuss the readings of a particular week. In this forum you should (i) discuss and answer the discussion questions I post for every reading, (ii) raise additional questions about the readings that you have, and (iii) respond to each other's posts. Students will also post their reading responses in these discussion forums so that their questions and objections they raise can be discussed by the group. I will give you a forum participation grade every week — so all your forum posts have to be written by the end of the day on **Sunday** of a particular week in order to receive credit.

Final Exam:

The final exam for this course will be a take-home exam that is due at **11.59pm on July 28th**. It will cover all the material we've discussed this semester and consist of short answer questions that are designed to test your understanding of the main points discussed throughout the course. I will distribute the exam questions a week in advance.

Notes:

(1) Please write your PID instead of your names on your papers and exams to allow for blind grading.

(2) The required writing for this class will exceed 10 pages.

Due Dates and Late Policy

Short papers are due by 11.59pm on the day assigned on the syllabus. Please email me a copy of your paper. I'm usually happy to give anyone who needs it a short extension for the short papers of a day or two. If you would like to have a short extension, please send me an email and ask. After two days, short papers will be docked 1/2 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 (<https://deanofstudents.unc.edu/>).

Reading Responses are due at 8.00am on the day for which the reading you are responding to is assigned. Late papers will be docked 1/2 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 (<https://deanofstudents.unc.edu/>).

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.

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 some parts of it might change over the course of this semester.)

Course Schedule

Week 1 - Skepticism about the external world

Monday, June 22nd - What is knowledge?

Watch Nagel's "Epistemology: Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge"

Tuesday, June 23rd - What can we know about the external world?

Read Descartes's *Meditations* (Read Meditations 1 and 2)

Wednesday, June 24th - A possible answer to skepticism

Read Vogel's "Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the best explanation"

Thursday, June 25th - Would it be bad if there was no external world?

Read Grau's "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine:
Philosophy and The Matrix"

Friday, June 26th - A new skeptical argument

Read Bostrom's "The Simulation Argument: Why the Probability That You Are
Living in a Matrix is Quite High"

Week 2 - Consciousness

Monday, June 29th - Descartes's Dualism

Read Descartes's *Meditations* (Read Meditation 6)

Read Correspondence between Descartes and Princess Elizabeth (Selections)

Tuesday, June 30th - Identity Theory: The mind is the brain

Read Place's "Is consciousness a brain process?"

Wednesday, July 1st - Functionalism

Read Putnam's "The nature of mental states"

Thursday, July 2nd—Epiphenomenalism

Read Jackson's "Epiphenomenal Qualia"

Friday, July 3rd - No Class (University Holiday)

Week 3 - The meaning of life and the existence of God

Monday, July 6th - Fine-tuning and the existence of God

Read Collins' "God, Design and Fine-Tuning"

Paper 1 due at 11.59pm

Tuesday, July 7th - The problem of evil

Read Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* (Read the chapter "Rebellion")

Wednesday, July 8th - An answer to the problem of evil

Read Adams's "The problem of evil"

Thursday, July 9th - Is human existence absurd?

Read Nagel's "The absurd"

Friday, July 10th - How could our lives have meaning?

Read Wolf's "The meanings of lives"

Week 4 - Ethics

Monday, July 13th - Introduction

Read Singer "Famine, Affluence and Morality"

Tuesday, July 14th - Utilitarianism

Read Mill's *Utilitarianism* (Chapter 2)

Wednesday, July 15th - Kantianism

Read O'Neill's "A simplified account of Kantian ethics"

Thursday, July 16th - Should we try to be as moral as we can be?

Read Wolf's "Moral Saints"

Friday, July 17th - Is morality objective or relative?

Read Rachels's "The challenge of cultural relativism"

Week 5 - Free Will

Monday, July 20th - Free will without determinism

Read Chisholm's "Human freedom and the self"

Paper 2 at 11.59pm

Tuesday, July 21st - Compatibilism

Read Frankfurt's "Freedom of the will and the concept of person"

Wednesday, July 22nd - Incompatibilism without moral responsibility

Read Strawson's "The impossibility of ultimate moral responsibility"

Thursday, July 23rd - Free will is compatible with determinism for *right* actions

Read Wolf's "Asymmetrical Freedom"

Friday, July 24th - No Class (Reading Day)

Week 6 - Final Exam Period

Monday, July 27th - No Class (Exam Period)

Tuesday, July 28th - No Class (Exam Period)

Final Exam due at **11.59pm**