

PHIL0220 Introduction to Philosophy

Course site: <http://canvas.brown.edu>

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to some interesting and accessible topics in philosophy. It also provides tools for evaluating arguments critically. Here are some of the questions we will focus on: Is it rational to believe in God if He will reward your belief with infinite happiness? Do we have free will? What makes you the same person over time? Do we know that the world exists? Can we justify our belief that the sun will rise again tomorrow? Can two distinct objects exist at the same time and the same location? Do we exist?

This course has no prerequisites.

Course Requirements

1. Participation (20%): In lieu of a final exam, you will be required to write a short response for each reading, which is usually due **5 pm the day before we discuss the reading**. Questions will be posted on our canvas site to guide your response. Responses to easy questions will be graded on a yes/no scale. (Example of an easy question: Which part of the reading do you find most difficult/ interesting/ stimulating?) Responses to harder questions will be graded on a scale of 0-2. (Example of a difficult question: What is the main thesis of the author? What is her main argument? Do you find the argument convincing? Why?) I will try to comment on most of your responses to the harder questions. And everyone should feel free to comment on the responses of the others. This requirement is intended to serve two purposes. First, I hope to tailor my lectures to your interests and needs. Second, I am hoping we will have some course-related mini-discussions outside of class.
2. Two short assignments (10% each): These assignments will be related to the logical tools we will study. You are allowed and encouraged to work with the others, but you must write up your answers on your own. You should also feel free to talk to me when you get stuck.
3. Three short papers (20% each): In each of these papers, you will be asked to explain and assess some of the arguments we discuss in class. You will be given the option to rewrite the first and the second papers. Your grade will be based on the revised papers only. The tentative due date for your third paper is **13 December**.

4. Regular attendance and participation in class discussions: They will be taken into account if you happen to have a borderline grade.

Readings

The readings will be posted on our canvas site or OCRA (<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/reserves/>). The password for accessing the readings on OCRA is: 'philosophy'.

Syllabus

4 Sept (W): Introductory Meeting

1.Basic Concepts in Logic

6 Sept (F): Mark Sainsbury, *Logical Forms*, Ch.1: pp.5-25

9 Sept (M): Mark Sainsbury, *Logical Forms*, Ch.1: pp.26-53

11 Sept (W): Mark Sainsbury, *Logical Forms*, Ch.2: pp.54-73

Assignment #1: Due 23 Sept

2.Arguments for the Existence of God and Pascal Wager

13 Sept (F):

- Thomas Aquinas, "Five Ways To Prove That God Exists", in Elliot Sober's *Core Questions in Philosophy*, 106-107;
- Elliot Sober, *Core Questions in Philosophy*, pp.36-48

16 Sept (M):

- Blaise Pascal, "The Wager";
- Optional Reading: Martin Peterson, *Introduction to Decision Theory*, Ch.2: The Decision Matrix

18 Sept (W): William Lycan and George Schlesinger, "You Bet Your Life: Pascal's Wager Defended"

20 Sept (F): William Lycan and George Schlesinger, "You Bet Your Life: Pascal's Wager Defended"

3.Free Will and Determinism

23 Sept (M):

- Ted Sider, *Riddles of Existence*, Ch.6: Free Will

- **Assignment #1 due**

25 Sept (W): Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

27 Sept (F): Derk Pereboom, "Why We have No Free Will and Can Live Without It"

30 Sept (M): Derk Pereboom, "Why We have No Free Will and Can Live Without It"

Paper #1: Due 9 Oct

2 Oct (W): On writing a philosophy paper. No new reading.

4.Personal Identity

4 Oct (F): Ted Sider, *Riddles of Existence*, Ch.1: Personal Identity

7 Oct (M): John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

9 Oct (W): John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

11 Oct (F): John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

14 Oct (M): No Class. Fall Weekend Holiday.

5.How Do We Know Anything?

16 Oct (W):

- Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations I and II

- Paper #1 returned

18 Oct (F): Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*, Ch.2: How Do We Know Anything?

21 Oct (M): G. E. Moore, "Proof of an External World"

6.Problem of Induction

23 Oct (W): David Hume, *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpt)

25 Oct (F): Wesley Salmon, "An Encounter with David Hume"

28 Oct (M): Wesley Salmon, "An Encounter with David Hume"

30 Oct (W):

- Wesley Salmon, "An Encounter with David Hume"

- **Paper #1 rewrite due**

Paper #2: Due 8 Nov

7.Puzzles about Material Constitution

1 Nov (F):

- Ted Sider, *Riddles of Existence*, Ch.7: Constitution

4 Nov (M): Mark Heller, "Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects"

6 Nov (W): Mark Heller, "Temporal Parts of Four-Dimensional Objects"

8.The Grue Problem

8 Nov (F):

- Nelson Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction"

- **Paper #2 due**

11 Nov (M): Nelson Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction"

13 Nov (W): Nelson Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction"

Paper #3: Due 13 Dec

(*If you plan to send me a draft, please send it to me before **Nov 30**)

9.Vagueness

15 Nov (F):

- Peter Unger, "I Do Not Exist"

- Paper #2 Returned

18 Nov (M): Peter Unger, "I Do Not Exist"

20 Nov (W): Gennaro Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Meaning and Grammar*, Ch.8.5: Semantic Imprecision

22 Nov (F):

-Gennaro Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Meaning and Grammar*, Ch.8.5: Semantic Imprecision

- **Paper #2 rewrite due**

Assignment #2: Due 13 Dec

25 Nov (M): Gennaro Chierchia and Sally McConnell-Ginet, *Meaning and Grammar*, Ch.8.5: Semantic Imprecision

27 Nov (W): Mark Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, Ch.3: Vagueness

29 Nov (F): Mark Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, Ch.3: Vagueness

2 Dec (M): Mark Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, Ch.3: Vagueness

4 Dec (W): Mark Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, Ch.3: Vagueness

6 Dec (F): Discussions on Paper #3 and Assignment #2

13 Dec (F): **Assignment #2 and Paper #3 due**

Resources

Guide to Taking Philosophy Classes: <http://www.mit.edu/~philos/guides/pinkguide.pdf>

How to Read a Philosophy Paper: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

A Philosophical Glossary for Beginners: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/glossary.html>

For more help with writing in general: http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Writing_Center/