

PHI 107: M100 THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE & REALITY

FALL 2024

CLASS MEETING: Lecture: TTh 11:00 - 11:55 AM, 107 Hall of Languages

(+ one of 4 discussion sections on Wednesday)

INSTRUCTORS: Lecturer: Prof. Robert Van Gulick rvangul@syr.edu

Office hours in 536 HL: Wed 2:00-3:30 PM & by appt.

Discussion Section Leaders (with office hours *tba*):

- Hwan Ho (sections 101 & 103) office hours Thurs 2:00-3:00PM & by appointment
- Tong Pan (sections 102 & 104) office hours Wed 12:00-1:00PM & by appointment

COURSE TOPIC: An introduction to some of the *main issues, theories & arguments* in the areas of philosophy concerned with knowledge (*epistemology*) and with fundamental and basic features of reality (*metaphysics*). The course will have 4 equal units concerned with four core issues:

- the existence of God,
- the nature and limits of Knowledge,
- the relation of Mind & Matter (Mind-Body problem),
- the problem of Free Will.

As well as providing an understanding of the philosophical theories and debates on those four topics, the course is intended to introduce students to *the methods and skills of philosophical thinking and reasoning, both in evaluating the arguments of others and in constructing and defending arguments of one's own. The course develops the general skill of writing an argumentative essay.*

TEXT: J. Feinberg and R. Schafer-Landau *Reason & Responsibility* (Cengage 16th edition)

The digital **e-book** can be **rented** (for 180 days) through the SU Bookstore.

A few additional readings will be provided online on Blackboard.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Regular attendance at lectures and participation in discussion sessions.
- Reading assignment *before class*, thinking about it & being prepared to discuss it.
- Midterm exam: (Thurs 10/17, in class).
- Final exam: (Monday 12/16, 5:15-7:15pm).
- 2 Essay papers (3-4/4-5 pages in length). Topics & instructions to be distributed.
- 1-page practice essay (+ other possible short assignments by your TA).

GRADING: Individual letters grades (A-F with possible + or -) will be given on each exam and essay. Course grade will be determined by the following number of possible points:

- First essay = 40 pts
- Second essay = 40 pts
- Midterm Exam = 40 pts
- Final Exam = 60 pts
- Section (attendance, participation, section quizzes) = 20 pts

Maximum total = 200 pts

(for course grade, divide total by 50 to get GPA letter grade based on 4.0 scale.)

PHI 107 Reading Assignments & Course Calendar of exams and due dates.
(All readings & page numbers from *Reason & Responsibility* unless noted otherwise)

Introduction.

Tues 8/27 - Introduction, overview of the course - no reading.

Thurs 8/29 - *Logic, Arguments & Validity* + *The Value of Philosophy*.

- *A Logic Lesson* pp. 1-8. (*read before section meeting*)**
- Bertrand Russell, "The value of philosophy", pp. 22-25.

1. Existence of God.

Tues 9/3 Introduction to Part I & *The Ontological Argument*:

- Part I Introduction - Reason and Religious Belief, pp. 27-31
- St. Anselm, "The Ontological Argument" pp. 31-33.
- Guanilo, "On behalf of the fool" pp 33-36.
- William Rowe, "The Ontological Argument" pp.36-47.

Thurs 9/5 *The Cosmological Argument*.

- St. Thomas Aquinas "The Five Ways" p. 47-48.
- S. Clarke "A modern formulation of the cosmological argument" 49-59.

 **Thurs 9/5 ** One-page ungraded practice writing assignment distributed).**

Tues 9/10 *The Argument from Design (Teleological Argument)*

- William Paley, "The argument from design" pp. 59-64.
- Michael Ruse, "The argument from Design" pp.65-75.
- David Hume "Dialogues on natural religion" only Part V, pp.88-90.

Thurs 9/12 *The Problem of Evil*

- J.L. Mackie, "Evil and omnipotence", pp. 118-126.

 **Thurs 9/12 ** One-page ungraded practice writing assignment due.**

Tues 9/17 The Problem of Evil (continued)

- Robert M. Adams, "Must God create the best?" on BLACKBOARD
- Peter van Inwagen, "The Argument from Evil" pp. 126-36.
- B. C. Johnson, "God and the problem of evil" pp. 147-51.

Thurs 9/19 *Reason & Faith*

- Kelly Clark "Without evidence or argument" pp. 164-69.
- Blaise Pascal, "The wager" pp. 169-72.
- Lawrence Shapiro, "Miracles and Justification" pp.172-80.
- Simon Blackburn, "Infini - Rien" pp. 180-83

 **Thurs 9/19 ** First graded essay assignment posted (due Thurs, 10/3) ****

2. Nature and Limits of Knowledge:

- Tues 9/24** Introduction Part II - Human Knowledge, its Grounds & Limits pp. 185-93.
The Problem of Skepticism
- René Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy: Synopsis & Meditation I* pp. 240-44.
 - John Pollock, "A brain in a vat," pp. 193-95.
- Thurs 9/26** • Michael Huemer, "The three skeptical arguments", pp. 195-200.
• René Descartes, *Meditations II & III*, pp. 244-56.
- Tues 10/1** • René Descartes, *Meditation VI*, pp. 264-72.
• Bertrand Russell, "Appearance, reality & existence of matter", pp. 232-40.
• John Locke, "The causal theory of perception", pp. 274-82.
- Thurs 10/3** *The problem of Induction*
- David Hume from *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, only Sections IV & V, pp. 296-308.
 - Wesley Salmon, "An Encounter with David Hume", pp. 320-39.

 **Thurs 10/3 ** First graded essay Due ****

Tues 10/8 Fall Break – no class.

- Thurs 10/10** *Scientific Method and Evidence*
- Karl Popper, "Science: Conjectures & Refutations", pp. 340-44.
 - Philip Kitcher, "Believing where we cannot prove", pp. 344-54.

Tues 10/15 **Facts & Reasons: Readings from Philosophy blog "The Stone" in NYTimes (on Blackboard):** 5 short items the philosophy blog "The Stone" in the NY Times about whether people base their beliefs on reasons.

1. Review entitled "Why Won't They Listen" of book by psychologist Jonathan Haidt (NYU) entitled "The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion (NY Times March 23, 2012).
2. Opinion article entitled "Look How Far We've Come" by Jonathan Haidt and Marc Hetherington (NY Times Sept 17, 2012).
3. Opinion piece from "The Stone" (Philosophy blog) by philosopher Michael Lynch (SU Ph.D., Prof at U Conn) attacking Haidt's views about the non-importance of reasons, entitled "A Vote for Reason" (NY Times Sept 30, 2012).
4. Opinion piece from "The Stone" (Philosophy blog) by philosopher Gary Gutting (Notre Dame) also about Haidt's views entitled "Haidt's Problem with Plato"(NYTimes 10/4/12).
5. Reply to Lynch and Gutting by Jonathan Haidt entitled ""Reasons Matter (When Intuitions Don't Object). (NY Times Oct 7, 2012).

 **Thurs 10/17 **MIDTERM EXAM in class.****

3. Minds, Brains and Persons

Tues 10/22 Mind Body Problems

- Introduction to Part 3 "Mind and its Place in Nature" 355-59.
- Paul Churchland, Selection from *Matter & Consciousness: The Mind Body Problem* (To be posted on Blackboard.)
- Jerry Fodor, "The Mind Body Problem" (To be posted on Blackboard)

Thurs 10/24 • *Dualism*: Frank Jackson "The qualia problem" 372-76.

Tues 10/29 • *Identity Physicalism* David Papineau "Case for Materialism", pp. 376-82.

Thurs 10/31 • *Functionalism*: Paul Churchland, "Functionalism and eliminative materialism", pp. 382-91.

 **Thurs 10/31 **Second Essay Assignment posted. (Due Thurs 11/16) ***

Tues 11/5 *Personal Identity*

- John Locke, "The prince and the cobbler", pp. 413-16.
- Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's account of personal identity" pp.416-19.

Thurs 11/7 • John Perry "A Dialogue on Personal Identity & Immortality", 432-52.

4. Free Will

Tues 11/12 • Introduction: Part 4 "Determinism, Free Will & Responsibility" 453-59.
• Roderick Chisholm, "Human freedom and the self", pp. 459-67.

Thurs 11/14 • David Hume "Of liberty and necessity", pp. 504-10
• A.J. Ayer "Freedom and necessity" On Blackboard.
• Helen Beebe "Compatibilism and the Ability to Do Otherwise", 510-20

 **Thurs 11/14 ** Second Essay due Thurs 11/14 **.**

Tues 11/19 • James Rachels "Hard Determinism: The Case for Determinism and its Incompatibility with any Important Sense of Free Will", pp. 481-490.
• Derk Pereboom "Why we have no free will & can live without it", 491-50

Thurs 11/21 • Robert Kane, "Free will: Ancient dispute, new themes", pp. 467-80

----THANKSGIVING BREAK----

Tues 12/3 • Harry Frankfurt Alternate possibilities & moral responsibility 528-34.

Thurs 12/5 • Thomas Nagel "Moral luck", pp. 534-42.
• Susan Wolf "Sanity and the metaphysics of responsibility", pp. 542-52.

5. Epilogue - "The Big Question"

Tues 12/10 - Richard Taylor, "The meaning of life" 705-11.

Thomas Nagel, "The absurd", pp. 739-46.



Monday 12/16, Final EXAM, 5:15PM – 7:15PM.

Use of electronic devices in class.

Use of cell/mobile phones is not permitted during class; they should be muted and put away. **Use of laptops and tablets is allowed but only for taking notes or other uses directly related to the class.** Use of devices for email, browsing or any other non-course use is prohibited during class.

• **SPECIAL NEEDS** - All special needs and disabilities will be gladly accommodated in accord with SU POLICY STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Center for Disability Resources, 804 University Avenue, Suite 303, (315) 443-4498. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Center for Disability Resources, <https://disabilityresources.syr.edu/>* If you have any such disability, please ***make an appointment to meet with me early in the semester to discuss the specifics.*** I will also receive a copy of your accommodation letter directly online from CDR.

• **SU POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Syracuse University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit and for upholding course-specific, as well as university-wide, academic integrity expectations. The policy governs citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and truthfulness in all academic matters, including course attendance and participation. The policy also prohibits students from: 1) submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving advance written authorization from both instructors and, 2) using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course materials to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and present the work as their own. Under the policy, instructors who seek to penalize a student for a suspected violation must first report the violation to the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS). Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Instructors must wait to assign a final course grade until a suspected violation is reviewed and upheld or overturned. Upholding Academic Integrity includes abiding by instructors' individual course expectations, which may include the protection of their intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or otherwise share instructors' course materials without permission. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered, as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice

• **Academic Integrity in PHI 107**

Academic integrity is taken very seriously in PHI 107, and any suspected **violations will be thoroughly investigated and sanctions imposed if a violation is determined to have occurred.** Students will be given **full opportunity to respond** to any charges and retain the **right to appeal** any decision or sanction to the A&S College Committee on Student Standards. **Intentional violations will usually lead to a disciplinary F in the course.**

All students are expected to fulfill their course work in an ethical manner, particularly with respect to any work - whether a paper, quiz, or exam - submitted as part of the basis for grading in the course. **Any work submitted by the student is done so with the understanding that it is his or her own work product.**

Students should understand that **plagiarism involves any case in which the *words or ideas* of another person are presented without a clear indication that the student has borrowed those words or ideas from a source.** The following count as plagiarism:

- Submission of a paper written by another person.
- Cut and paste material from an outside source which is not explicitly credited as such.
- Uncredited direct quotation from an outside source.
- Paraphrased text from an outside source that is not explicitly credited.
- Ideas, arguments, or objections taken from an outside source that are not explicitly credited as such.

If you have any questions about these requirements at any time, please consult with the course instructor or your TA.

• **Mental Health Resources.** Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. As such it is essential that during your college experience you develop the skills and resources to effectively navigate stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns. **Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources the Barnes Center provides (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) and seek out support for mental health concerns as needed. Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days, at 315-443-8000.** I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute, <https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/>