

PHI 107: THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

SPRING 2025

TIME: TUESDAY & THURSDAY 5:00 – 6:20PM

LOCATION: HALL OF LANGUAGES 111

Instructor: Roger Rosena

Email: rdrosena@syr.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description: In this course we will be introducing some of the main issues, theories, and arguments in areas concerned with knowledge (epistemology) and reality (metaphysics). Questions include: What is knowledge? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? Does God exist? What does it mean to be free and do we have free will?

In the process of investigating these questions, you will learn how to think and write philosophically. By the end of this course, you will be able to articulate your philosophical beliefs clearly and concisely, construct and defend positions, and reason persuasively.

This course is a writing intensive course. This means that writing is an extensive part of the grade and your grades will be linked to the quality and content of your written work.

Course Material: All readings will be made available electronically and posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read the material and ask questions if necessary.

Technology: The use of technology is permitted and encouraged. However, this use is intended for the purpose of enriching the classroom experience. What this means is that non-classroom related activities (ex. texting, social media, buying clothes, etc.) is not tolerated. These activities are disrespectful to me and a distraction to the students around you. If you have an emergency and use your phone or other items, please step out of the room first.

Attendance and Class Participation: I expect that you will attend every class and arrive on time. You will not do well in this class unless you show up to this class. In this course, attendance also means that you are not only *physically* present, but you are also *actively engaging* with the course material. Your participation grade will be based primarily on the quality and quantity of your engagement in the class. If you are sick or have a legitimate reason for missing class, let me know as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, "Academic Integrity," and "Expectations and Policy."

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty's intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors' course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online.

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. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level.

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask the instructor.

Accommodations: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations should register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Please provide me with a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS so I am aware of your accommodations. Planning for accommodations as early as possible is best. I'd be happy to meet with you to discuss how I can help.

Religious Observations: The university recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under this policy, students have an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify the instructor no later than the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibility classes.

Guidelines for Classroom Behavior: I intend to have a civil and inclusive classroom throughout the semester. A positive learning environment relies upon creating an atmosphere where diverse perspectives can be expressed, especially in a course that focuses on a variety of controversial issues. Each student is encouraged to take an active part in class discussions and activities. Honest and respected dialogue is expected. Disagreement and challenging of ideas in a supportive and sensitive manner is encouraged. Hostility and disrespectful behavior is not tolerated.

Just as we expect others to listen attentively to our views, we must reciprocate and listen to others when they speak, especially when we disagree with them. However, in this class, our emphasis will be on engaging in the mutual exploration of issues as presented in the course readings as scholars rather than in defending points of view we have formed outside of the classroom.

Grading and Evaluation: *I expect all assignments to be turned in on time. If you have any issues, let me know in advance*

10% Attendance and Participation

40% Unit Assessments/Quizzes: 4 in total [worth 10% each]

50% Short Papers: 4 in total [worth 12.5% each]

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-72	72-70	69-60	59-0

Course Schedule: *This schedule may change and all changes will be communicated through Blackboard and email*

1/14: Introduction

No Reading

UNIT 1: EPISTEMOLOGY AND SKEPTICISM

1/16: Knowledge, True Belief, and Justification

Edmund Gettier – “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

1/21: Humean Skepticism

David Hume – Selections from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

1/23: Cartesian Skepticism

Rene Descartes – *Meditation on First Philosophy* (1st Meditation)

UNIT 2: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

1/28: The Problem of Demarcation and Falsifiability
Karl Popper – Selections from *Conjectures and Refutations*

1/30: Are There Values in Science?
Helen Longino – “Gender, Politics, and Theoretical Virtues”

QUIZ 1 DUE 1/31

2/4: TBD

2/6: What is a Philosophy of Social Science?
Emile Durkheim – “What is a Social Fact?”

PAPER 1 DUE 2/7

2/11: Social Constructivism and Social Ontology
Sally Haslanger – Social Construction: Who? What? Where? How?

2/13: Problems in Philosophy of Psychiatry
Selections from *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.)
Ian Hacking – “Making Up People”

UNIT 3: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND (THE MIND BODY PROBLEM)

2/18: Dualism
Rene Descartes – *Meditations on First Philosophy* (2nd Meditation)
Elisabeth of Bohemia – Letters to Descartes of May 6th, 1643 (pgs. 61-62)

2/20: Identity Theory
J.J.C Smart – “Sensations and Brain Processes” (pgs. 144-147, 150-153, 155-156)

QUIZ 2 DUE 2/21

2/25: Functionalism
Hilary Putnam – “The Nature of Mental States” (Sections I, II, IV, V)

2/27: Panpsychism
Philip Goff – “There Is More to Matter Than What It Does: How Panpsychism Solves the Hard Problem of Consciousness”

3/4: The New Dualists
Frank Jackson – “What Mary Didn’t Know”

3/6: Can Computers Think?

Alan Turing – Computing, Machinery, and Intelligence (pgs. 433-435 & pgs. 450-451)

NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK 3/9/24 – 3/16/24

UNIT 4: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (GOD, RELIGION, AND FAITH)

3/18: The Existence of God and the Problem of Evil

Andrea Weisberger – “The Argument from Evil”

3/20: Evidence and Religious Belief

William James – “The Will to Believe”

PAPER 2 DUE 3/21

3/25: Confirmation Biases and Religious Belief

Francis Bacon – Selections from *Novum Organum*

3/27: Faith, Religion, and Rationality

Soren Kierkegaard – Selections from *Fear and Trembling*

QUIZ 3 DUE 3/28

UNIT 5: FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

4/1: Making Sense of Free Will

Adina Roskies – “Neuroscientific Challenges to Free Will and Moral Responsibility”

4/3: Genetic Engineering and Determinism

Michael Sandel – “What’s Wrong with Enhancement?”

4/8: Libertarianism and Free Will

Robert Kane – “Libertarianism” (Sections 1 and 2)

4/10: Hard Incompatibilism, Determinism, and the Possibility of Free Will

Derk Pereboom – “Hard Incompatibilism” (Sections 1, 4, 10-11)

PAPER 3 DUE 4/11

4/15: Hierarchical Accounts of Free Will

Harry Frankfurt – “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”

4/17: TBD

4/22: Reactive Attitudes and Free Will

Gary Watson – “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme”
(pgs. 127-130)

4/24: Challenges to Compatibilist Accounts of Free Will

Gary Watson – “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme”
(pgs. 130-132)

QUIZ 4 DUE 4/25

PAPER 4 DUE 5/1