

PHI 385: Personal Identity

M/W 2:15-3:35pm

Instructor: Erica Shumener

Email: eshumene@syr.edu

Office Hours: Mondays from 4-6pm

Office Location: 530 Hall of Languages

I. Course Description

We will address the following questions in this course:

1. What are persons? One straightforward answer is that persons are just human animals. But some philosophers believe that a person (in principle) can exist apart from their body (say, in an afterlife, or if their consciousness is uploaded into a robot). Are we really identical with human animals if we can continue to exist without biological parts?
2. How do persons persist over time? In other words, what kinds of changes can we survive and what kinds of changes will kill us?

II. Course Aims

1. Understand the differences among leading views on personhood.
2. Examine philosophical questions in a fun yet rigorous way.
3. Improve our critical thinking skills. We will dissect arguments to assess their faults and virtues. Additionally, we will improve our own argumentation. We will attempt to construct arguments that are well-reasoned and cogent.
4. Write clearly and persuasively.

III. Assessment

20%	Exam 1 (in class)
20%	Exam 2 (in class)
20%	Paper 1 3-5 double-spaced pages
20%	Paper 2 5-7 double-spaced pages
10%	Pop Quizzes (in class) Your 5 top scores (each quiz is worth 4% of your grade) will be counted. Pop quizzes will be distributed 10 minutes before the end of class. The quizzes will concern material from that day's session with the possibility of some material from the prior session.
10%	Attendance & Class Participation

	I will expect you to attend class regularly and participate. Not sure how to participate in a philosophy class? Take a look at this guide.
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IV. Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Unit	Reading (due on that date)	Anything Due?
August 26		Introduction (No Reading)	
August 28	Unit 1: Persons and Immaterial Souls	Descartes, <i>Meditations 1 and 2</i>	
September 2		Labor Day (no class)	
September 4	Unit 1: Persons and Immaterial Souls	Descartes, <i>Meditations 6</i> , Replies from Amo and Elisabeth of Bohemia	Practice Pop-Quiz
September 9	Unit 2: Persons and their Psychology	Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"	Paper 1 Prompt Posted
September 11	Unit 2: Persons and their Psychology	Locke, continued. Wilson Center Document Discussion of Paper Requirements	
September 16	Unit 2: Persons and their Psychology	No reading (Movie Day 1)	
September 18	Unit 2: Persons and their Psychology	No reading (Movie Day 2)	
September 23	Unit 2: Persons and their Psychology	Parfit, "Personal Identity"	
September 25	Unit 3: Persons and Animals	Olson, "An Argument for Animalism"	
September 30	Unit 3: Persons and Animals	Duncan, "Animalism is Either False or Uninteresting (Perhaps Both)"	Paper 1 Due
October 2	Unit 4: Persons and Communities	Menkiti, "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought"	
October 7	Unit 4: Persons and Communities	Menkiti (continued) and Gyekye, "Communal Structure and Personhood"	
October 9	Unit 5: Person and Narrative	Dennett "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity"	

October 14		Fall Break (No Class)	
October 16	Unit 5: Person and Narrative	Schechtman, "The Narrative Self"	
October 21	Class Visit to the Art Museum	No Reading	
October 23		No Reading/Review for Exam 1	
October 28		Exam 1 (in class component)	In-Class Exam
October 30	Unit 6: The No Self View	Hume excerpts	
November 4	Unit 6: The No Self View	Excerpts from <i>The Dialogues of King Melinda</i> Siderits	Paper 2 Prompt Posted
November 6	Unit 6: The No Self View	Siderits continued	
November 11	Paper Preparation	Paper Peer Review Exercise	
November 13	Unit 7: Persons and the Contemporary Metaphysics of Persistence	Lewis "Survival and Identity"	
November 18	Unit 7: Persons and the Contemporary Metaphysics of Persistence	Johnston, "The Personite Problem"	Paper 2 due by 11:59pm
November 20	Unit 8: Questioning the Orthodoxy around Personal Identity	Miller and Braddon-Mitchell, "How to be a Conventional Person"	
November 25		Break (no class)	
November 27		Break (no class)	
December 2	Unit 8: Questioning the Orthodoxy around Personal Identity	Kovacs "Conventionalist Accounts of Personal Identity Over Time"	
December 4		Exam 2 Review	
December 9	Unit 8:	Exam 2	

V. Electronics Policy

No laptops, phones, tablets, etc. will be permitted in class. Exceptions are allowed only on the basis of a recommendation by the university's CDR or a reason of similar strength (there is also a laptop/tablet

exception on your Class Minutes day). Come speak to me privately if you need special accommodations in this regard.

VI. Health

Because this is an in-person class, it is especially important that you abide by the university's public health guidelines. You can find the current guidelines at <https://www.syracuse.edu/staysafe/>. 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 effectively to 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, and I encourage you to explore the resources available through the Wellness Leadership Institute, <https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/wellness-leadership-institute/>.

VII. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. There may be aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion and full participation in this course. I invite any student to contact me to discuss strategies and/or accommodations (academic adjustments) that may be essential to your success and to collaborate with the Center for Disability Resources (CDR) in this process. If you would like to discuss disability-accommodations or register with CDR, please visit Center for Disability Resources. Please call (315) 443-4498 or email disabilityresources@syr.edu for more detailed information. The CDR is responsible for coordinating disability-related academic accommodations and will work with the student to develop an access plan. Since academic accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact CDR as soon as possible to begin this process.

VIII. Religious Observances

Syracuse University's Religious Observances Policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are given an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify their instructors no later than the academic drop deadline. For observances occurring before the drop deadline, notification is required at least two academic days in advance. Students may enter their observances in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification.

IX. 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. For all assignments, I will use the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin via Blackboard. Your participation in this class constitutes consent to have your work evaluated for plagiarism detection by Turnitin, and to have your work become part of the Turnitin reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such work. Using artificial intelligence to complete assignments is prohibited because developing your own voice as a writer is a key goal of this course. AI detection tools including Turnitin's built-in AI writing indicator, may be used as one factor in evaluating potential inappropriate use of AI in this course. 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 and present the work as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation, resulting in suspension or expulsion from Syracuse University. For details on the university's policies on academic integrity, see: <https://class.syr.edu/academic-integrity/policy/>. The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level. Any case in which there is strong evidence (e.g., from Turnitin or similar software) of the use of AI or any other violation of academic integrity will be reported directly to the Center for Learning and Student Success.

X. Absence and Late Work Policy

I will drop your lowest pop quiz score. You will not be able to take a make-up pop quiz unless you are excused due to an illness or religious observance.

If you expect to miss a class or hand in late work due to religious observances, you must inform me of the relevant dates within the first two weeks of the semester. Unless required by the university's public health guidelines, this course will be conducted exclusively in person. If you submit late work without a valid excuse from Student Outreach and Support, I will deduct one point (out of 10) for each 24 hour period that it is late. So, for example, if an assignment is due on Tuesday at 8:30am and you submit it on Tuesday at 10am, and you would have gotten eight points, you will instead get seven points for the assignment. I will stop accepting late assignments 72 hours after they are due.

If you need an extension on an assignment, please come talk to me as soon as possible and before the assignment is due.