

PHI 107: THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

SPRING 2024

TIME: TUESDAY & THURSDAY 3:30 – 4:50PM

LOCATION: LINK HALL 200

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: Plagiarism of any form and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to complete assignments is prohibited. The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work, the integrity of work submitted in exams, and assignments. This policy extends to the use of AI submitted assignments as well. This course will also use Turnitin to check if all sources you use are properly acknowledged. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. Information concerning academic integrity at SU is available at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

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*

1/16: Introduction

No Reading

UNIT 1: EPISTEMOLOGY AND SKEPTICISM

1/18: Knowledge, True Belief, and Justification

Edmund Gettier – “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

1/23: Knowledge and Certainty

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

1/25: Feminist Epistemology

Alison Wylie – “Why Standpoint Matters”

UNIT 2: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

1/30: The Problem of Demarcation and Falsifiability

Karl Popper – Selections from *Conjectures and Refutations*

2/1: Are There Values in Science?

Helen Longino – “Gender, Politics, and Theoretical Virtues”

QUIZ 1 DUE 2/2

2/6: TBD

2/8: What is a Philosophy of Social Science?

Michael Scriven – “A Possible Distinction Between Traditional Scientific Disciplines and the Study of Human Behavior”

PAPER 1 DUE 2/9

2/13: Social Constructivism and Social Ontology

Sally Haslanger – Social Construction: Who? What? Where? How?

2/15: 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)

2/20: Dualism

Rene Descartes – Meditations on First Philosophy (2nd Meditation)

Elisabeth of Bohemia – Letters to Descartes of May 6th, 1643 (pgs. 61-62)

2/22: Identity Theory

J.J.C Smart – “Sensations and Brain Processes” (pgs. 144-147, 150-153, 155-156)

QUIZ 2 DUE 2/23

2/27: Functionalism

Hilary Putnam – “The Nature of Mental States” (Sections I, II, IV, V)

2/29: Panpsychism

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

3/5: The New Dualists

Frank Jackson – “What Mary Didn’t Know”

3/7: Can Computers Think?

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

NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK 3/10/24 – 3/17/24

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

3/19: The Existence of God and the Problem of Evil

Andrea Weisberger – “The Argument from Evil”

3/21: Evidence and Religious Belief

William James – “The Will to Believe”

PAPER 2 DUE 3/22

3/26: Confirmation Biases and Religious Belief
Francis Bacon – Selections from *Novum Organum*

3/28: Faith, Religion, and Rationality
Soren Kierkegaard – Selections from *Fear and Trembling*

QUIZ 3 DUE 3/29

UNIT 5: FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

4/2: Making Sense of Free Will
Adina Roskies – “Neuroscientific Challenges to Free Will and Moral Responsibility”

4/4: Genetic Engineering and Determinism
Michael Sandel – “What’s Wrong with Enhancement?”

4/9: Libertarianism and Free Will
Robert Kane – “Libertarianism” (Sections 1 and 2)

4/11: Hard Incompatibilism, Determinism, and the Possibility of Free Will
Derk Pereboom – “Hard Incompatibilism” (Sections 1, 4, 10-11)

PAPER 3 DUE 4/12

4/16: Hierarchical Accounts of Free Will
Harry Frankfurt – “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”

4/18: TBD

4/23: Reactive Attitudes and Free Will
Gary Watson – “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme”
(pgs. 127-130)

4/25: 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 4/26

PAPER 4 DUE 5/1