

PHI 107: Theories of Knowledge and Reality

Spring 2026

Main Lecture:

MW 11:40 – 12:35, 107 Hall of Languages

Discussion Sections (Held on Fridays):

9:30 – 10:25, 213A HB Crouse

10:35 – 11:30, 337 Smith Hall

11:40 – 12:35, 213A HB Crouse

12:45 – 1:40 , 213A HB Crouse

Instructor: James Lee

Office Hours: Use any of the contact info below if you have questions or need to meet.

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Phone: (414) 721-1268

Discord: Philo#1648

Teaching Assistant: Stacy Cunningham

Office Hours: In-Person at Bowne Hall 103 Thursdays from 1 PM to 3 PM and over Zoom by appointment at this link: [Book time with Stacy Cunningham: 15 minutes meeting \(Bowne 103\).](#)

Email: scunni05@syr.edu

Teaching Assistant: Seungho Jo

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 4 – 5 pm at 103 Bowne Hall.

Email: sjo103@syr.edu

Textbook

There is no required textbook for this class. All supplemental readings and videos will be available on Blackboard.

Course Description

This class is about doing philosophy. You will learn to do what philosophers do and apply these skills to various areas both in philosophy and in ordinary life. You'll learn the following 3 skills:

1. Conceptual Analysis
2. Thought Experiments
3. Philosophical Explanation

Once you learn these skills, you will apply these skills by constructing and articulating your worldview. What's a worldview? A worldview is the mental framework that you use to interpret everything around you. A worldview answers questions like, "What is the meaning of life?" and "Why are humans the way that they are?"

Course Objectives

This is what you're supposed to get out of the class.

- Master certain philosophical skills.
- Apply these skills to issues surrounding what makes your life meaningful

Course Requirements

1. Attendance: 50%

In order to get credit for attendance, you will need to register on the website for Poll Everywhere. You can do this on your first day of class, since we will use the website for every class.

2. Exams: 30%

There will be three exams. Each exam is graded out of 10 points is worth 10% of your grade. Each exam will assess each of the three skills listed above. Exam dates are tentatively as follows:

EXAM 1: Feb 11

EXAM 2: Mar 18

EXAM 3: Apr 27

3. Final Exam: 20%

In addition to the abovementioned three exams. There will be a final exam for the course. During the semester, we will be covering a number of topics related to what is known as a philosophical worldview. The final exam will assess your ability to articulate your own worldview using the three skills we've worked on throughout the semester.

The date of the final exam is Tuesday, May 5, from 3 to 5 pm at 107 Hall of Languages.

Course Schedule

So this schedule is kind of tentative and there may be changes. If there are any changes, then I'll make announcements both in class and on Blackboard.

Phase I

- Learning how to perform a conceptual analysis
- Analyzing the question, "What is the meaning of life"
- Understanding the difference between intrinsic and instrumental value.
- Identifying and analyzing intrinsic values:
 - Happiness
 - Love
 - Morality
 - Knowledge
 - Freedom

Phase II

- Learning how to understand and interpret thought experiments
- Analyzing the question, "What is human nature?"
- Are humans unique among other animals? If so, what makes them unique?
- What is a mind?
- Is there life after death? When does a human go out of existence?
- Do humans have free will?

Phase III

- Learning how explanations work and what makes for a good philosophical explanation
- What is the ultimate nature of reality?
 - Is reality completely physical?
 - Is reality correctly described by a particular religion?
 - Is reality non-physical, but not like how any religion describes it?
- How does one's view about the ultimate nature of reality explain their view on human nature and intrinsic values?

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS:

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498.

Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review these accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary.

For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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 policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

For more information and the complete policy, see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures on the University's website at <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.