

PHI 109 Introduction to Philosophy (Honors)

Crouse Hinds Hall 003

Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:00-3:20pm

I. Instructor:

Erica Shumener

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30-5:30pm

Office: Hall of Languages (office 530)

II. Course Description and Objectives

This is an introductory philosophy course. We will learn to assess arguments for validity and soundness. Our focus will be on improving our critical reasoning skills and then using these skills to address philosophical issues pertaining to free will, the mind-body problem, skepticism, and morality. More specifically, the aims of this course are to:

1. Examine philosophical questions in a fun yet rigorous way. Are our choices free? Do we have immaterial souls? How much can we know about the external world? Is abortion wrong? Philosophers have many perspectives on these topics. We will examine some of their responses to these questions, considering how they impact our own views along the way.
2. 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.
3. Write clearly and persuasively.

III. Course Texts

There is no required textbook. All readings will be posted on Blackboard. Many of our readings can be found in two course textbooks. If you find it helpful to have a textbook, I recommend either of the following:

Perry, Bratman, and Fischer, *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (Ninth Edition)

Rosen, Byrne, Cohen, Harman, Schifffrin, *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* (Second Edition)

IV. Course Assessment

- A. Participation: 20%

You must assume each of the following roles for two different readings/class sessions (i.e, you must sign up to be The Tormentor for two readings, The Defender for two readings, The Illuminator for two readings, and The Recapper for two readings).

The Tormentor: As The Tormentor, you will raise objections to the reading in question. You must offer at least one criticism during the seminar session. 5%

The Defender: As The Defender, you will defend the author's points against criticisms. You can respond to criticisms levied by The Tormentor, the instructor, your classmates, or even (sometimes) those raised by the author themselves! You must offer at least one defense during the seminar session. 5%

The Illuminator: As The Illuminator, you will attempt to clarify confusions in the reading and in the discussion. We will call upon you to help us understand obscure passages, and we will rely upon you to set us straight if you think we are misunderstanding the author's claims. You must offer at least one illumination during the seminar session. 5%

The Recapper: As The Recapper, you will provide a one-page (approximately 350-500 word) summary of the reading and class discussion for the session. For instance, you will include 1-2 paragraphs summarizing the reading, and 1-3 paragraphs (or bullet points) of the main points covered in the classroom discussion. To prepare to write the recap, The Recapper must attend the class on the day of the discussion, and they must complete and understand the main points of the reading. The recapper must submit their recap (at the latest) **5 days after class** via email to Erica Shumener.

Here is the sign-up sheet:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rQg8kFjZx2HoWYU7AFCDfHwshkGd9XKBX8SI0qQGEE8/edit?usp=sharing>

(you can also access it via Blackboard).

- B. Take Home Exam 1 20%
- C. Take Home Exam 2 20%
- D. Paper 1 20%
- E. Paper 2: 20%
- F. Creative Project 20% The grade for your Creative Project will replace the grade for your lowest paper (if it is higher than your lowest paper grade). Ideas for the creative project:

- Short Story: You can write a short story about one of the philosophical topics this semester. For inspiration, I recommend the following short stories, which centrally concern philosophical themes:

Borges, "The Immortal", Chiang "Stories of Your Lives and Others", Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from the Omelas")

- Visual or Auditory Art Project (sculpture, song, painting, poster, comic strip)
- Podcast debate.

V. Course Schedule. (Subject to change)

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
January 17	Introduction	No reading	
January 19	Introduction to Arguments	Perry, Bratman, and Fischer, "Logical Toolkit"	

		Optional Video: “Deductive Arguments”	
January 24	Introduction to Free Will	D’Holbach, “We are Completely Determined”	
January 26	Free Will: Compatibilism	Hume, “Liberty and Necessity”	
January 31	Free Will & Moral Responsibility	Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”	
February 2	Paper Discussion	Pryor, “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”	
February 7	Free Will & Moral Responsibility, Continued	Nagel, “Moral Luck”	
February 9	The Mind-Body Problem: Introduction to Descartes	Descartes, <i>Meditation 1</i> & II	
February 14	The Mind-Body Problem: Substance Dualism	Descartes, <i>Meditation VI</i>	
February 16	The Mind-Body Problem: Amo and Elisabeth	Amo, <i>The Impassivity of the Mind</i> (highlighted excerpts) Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia (Excerpts)	
February 18	Not a class day	Not a class day	Paper 1 Due via email to Erica Shumener
February 21	The Mind-Body Problem: Physicalism & The Identity Theory	Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes”	
February 23	The Mind-Body Problem: Subjective Experience and the Mind	Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”	
February 28	Skeptical Doubts: External World Skepticism	Review Descartes <i>Meditation 1</i> Moore, “Proof of an External World”	

		Optional Video: The Problem of Skepticism	
March 2	Skeptical Doubts: Skepticism Defeated?	Vogel, “The Refutation of Skepticism” Optional Video: Three Responses to Skepticism	
March 7	Skeptical Doubts: Inductive Skepticism	Hume, Excerpts from <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> Optional Videos: Hume’s Skepticism, Pt.1 , Hume’s Skepticism, Pt.2	
March 9	Promising against the Evidence	<i>Marušić</i> , “Promising against the Evidence” Optional Videos: Promising Against the Evidence #1 , Promising Against the Evidence #2	
March 10	Not a class day	Not a class day	Take-Home Exam 1 Due (via email to Erica)
March 14 (Spring Break)	No class	No class	
March 16 (Spring Break)	No class	No class	
March 21	Our Beliefs about our Friends	Keller, “Friendship and Belief”	
March 23	Death 1	Excerpts from Lucretius, Nagel’s “Death”	
March 28	Death 2	Williams, “The Makropulos Case”	
March 30	Applied Ethics 1: Altruism	Singer, “Famine, Affluence and Morality”	
April 4	Applied Ethics 1: Altruism	Wolf, “Moral Saints”	
April 6	Class Cancelled	Class Cancelled	Take Home Exam 2 Due

April 11	Applied Ethics 2: Abortion	Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”	
April 13	Applied Ethics 2: Abortion	Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”	
April 18	The Meaning of Life	Plato, <i>Apology</i>	
April 20	The Meaning of Life	Metz, “African Theories of Meaning in Life: A Critical Assessment”	Paper 2 Due
April 25	The Meaning of Life	Nagel, “The Absurd” Street, “Does Anything Really matter or did we just evolve to think so?”	
April 27	The Meaning of Life	Wolf, “Happiness and Meaning”	
May 3			Creative Project Due (if submitting)

VI. Grading Scale

94% - 100%. A
 90% - <94% A-
 87.5% - <90% B+
 83.5% - <87.5% B
 80% - <83.5% B-
 77.5% - <80% C+
 73.5% - <77.5% C
 70% - <73.5% C-
 67.5% - <70% D+
 63.5% - <67.5% D
 60% - <63.5% D-
 <60%. F

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY STUDENT POLICIES & SERVICES

University Attendance Policy

(Attendance will not be taken in lecture, but it will be taken in recitation section)

Attendance in classes is expected in all courses at Syracuse University. Students are expected to arrive on campus in time to attend the first meeting of all classes for which they are registered. Students who do not attend classes starting with the first scheduled meeting may be academically withdrawn as not making progress toward degree by failure to attend. Instructors set course-specific policies for absences from scheduled class meetings in their syllabi.

It is a federal requirement that students who do not attend or cease to attend a class to be reported at the time of determination by the faculty. Faculty should use “ESPR” and “MSPR” in Orange Success to alert the

Office of the Registrar and the Office of Financial Aid. A grade of NA is posted to any student for whom the Never Attended flag is raised in Orange SUccess. More information regarding Orange SUccess can be found [here](#), at <http://orangesuccess.syr.edu/getting-started-2/>.

Students should also review the University's religious observance policy and make the required arrangements at the beginning of each semester.

Syracuse University Policies: Syracuse University has a variety of other policies designed to guarantee that students live and study in a community respectful of their needs [and those of fellow students](#). Some of the most important of these concern:

Diversity and Disability (ensuring that students are aware of their rights [and responsibilities](#) in a diverse, inclusive, accessible, bias-free campus community) can be found [here](#), at: <https://www.syracuse.edu/life/accessibilitydiversity/>.

Religious Observances Notification and Policy (steps to follow to request accommodations [for the](#) observance of religious holidays) can be found [here](#), at: http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm

Orange SUccess (tools to access a variety of SU resources, including ways to communicate with advisors and faculty members) can be found [here](#), at: <http://orangesuccess.syr.edu/getting-started-2/>

Disability-Related Accommodations: 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 meet with 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.

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. <https://disabilityresources.syr.edu/>

Academic Integrity Policy:

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation 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. SU 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.

