

Phil 381: Metaphysics**Syllabus****“Spring” 2023**

Professor Dowell

Office: 308 Hall of Languages

Office Hours: 10:30-11:30 TH

Where: 308 T, zoom H

E-mail: jldowell@syr.edu**Course Description:**

This course is an advanced introduction to metaphysics. We will focus on several related questions:

1. What is a philosophical thought experiment and how do they work?
2. What is an object? What is required for an object to continue to exist?
3. What is essential to a living being?
4. Which properties must a living being retain in order to continue to exist?
5. Could there be more than one living being in the exact same place at the exact same time?
6. What is the relationship between our concepts and what there is?
7. What makes a person the person that they are?
8. Which properties, if any, does a person have essentially? Which properties determine a person's metaphysical identity?
9. What is a person's ethical identity? What determines this?
10. What is the nature of our racial concepts and categories? Are racial categories real? If they are real, do members have their membership essentially? If they are real, are they natural or social categories?
11. What about our gender categories? Are they real?

Required Texts: All texts are posted on Blackboard**Course Plan*:****Objects: Their Persistence through Time**

1/17: Course overview, introduction to metaphysics, necessity, thought experiments

1/19: David Wiggins, “On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time”

- Our ordinary conception of physical objects, testing that conception

1/24: Wiggins

1/26: Wiggins (C)

1/31: Michael Burke, “Tibbles the Cat”; *Short Wiggins paper (250-300 word) due*

2/2: Burke (C)

2/7: Burke; Marjorie Price, “Identity through Time”

2/9: Price (C)

Persons: Their Identity and Essences

2/14: Price; Personal identity: What is the question?
2/16: personal identity: An Overview. *Short Price paper due (250-300 words)*
2/21: John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity",
2/23: Locke (C)
2/28: Thomas Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account",
3/2: selections from John Perry's dialogue, An Overview (C)
3/7: Perry, cont'd
3/9: Perry (C)

3/14 & 3/16: **SPRING BREAK!**

3/21: Perry; Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"
3/23: Parfit *Medium Perry paper due (350-400 words)*

Race: Conceptual and Categorical

3/28: Parfit
3/30: Parfit (C)
4/4: Anthony Appiah, "But Would That Still Be Me?"; Saul Kripke, excerpts from *Naming and Necessity*
4/6: Appiah; Sophie-Grace Chappell, <https://blog.apaonline.org/2018/07/20/trans-women-men-and-adoptive-parents-an-analogy/> (C)
4/11: Appiah; Allan Hazlett and Alyssa Ney, "The Metaphysics of Race".
4/13: Hazlett and Ney (C)
4/18: Joshua Glasgow, chp. 5,
4/20: Glasgow *Medium Metaphysics of Race paper due (350-400 words)*
4/25: Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: What Are They? What Do We Want Them To Be?"
4/27: Haslanger (C)

5/8: *Final project due*. Final paper is the default final project option (950-1100 words)

***Reading Schedule:** The reading schedule above may be subject to small changes. Changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to ensure that you know what the reading will be for the next class.

C indicates that the assignment for that day will be collected.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (10%)

Thursday writing assignments (20%)

- Every Thursday class will include a writing assignment.
- 10 of these writing assignments will be collected.
- 2 of the collected Thursday assignments may be missed, no questions asked.
- Each remaining collected assignment is 1/8th of your Thursday assignment grade.
- Full credit will be given to earnestly attempted assignments that are fully completed.
- Partial credit may be given for incomplete or poorly completed assignments.
- Assignments must be uploaded to Turnitin on Blackboard by **noon** on the Friday that is the day after a given Thursday assignment.
- Assignments turned in later will be penalized.
- Assignments turned in later than the Monday following an assignment **will not be accepted**.

2 short (250-300 words) papers (reading summaries): 10%/each

2 medium (350-400 words) length papers: 15%/each

Final project (20%) (Default project is a final paper, 950-1100 words)

Late papers will be penalized; papers and writing assignments later than two weeks past the deadline will not be accepted without evidence of serious illness.

Good philosophy paper writing advice:

<http://www1.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/AKind/Intro01s/Writing.htm>

The *University's Writing Center* also offers support for all aspects of paper writing for both native and non-native speakers. Meetings are kept confidential. More information on the center and how to make an appointment here:

<https://thecollege.syr.edu/writing-center/>

Class Rules:

The *use of cell phones* is not permitted during class time.

The *use of laptops for class purposes* is permitted. If another student complains about how you are using your laptop during class or you are found to be using it for some non-course purpose, you will be asked to turn it off.

University Policies:

Academic Integrity: See <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Chatbot written assignments violate the university's academic integrity policies and will be treated accordingly. Depending upon their severity, penalties for violations of that policy will range from a failed assignment to a failing grade for the course and a report of the violation to the university.

Religious Observances: See

http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm

Note: If you plan to avail yourself of the university's policy regarding religious observances, you **MUST** notify Professor Dowell by the end of the second week of class, (1/27/23).

Disability Services:

If you believe you need accommodation for a disability, please see the Office of Disability Services (ODS) <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu> for an appointment to discuss your needs. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations. *Since accommodations require early planning and are generally not offered retroactively, please contact the ODS* (phone: 315-443-4498, location: 804 University Avenue) *as soon as possible.*

Mental Health Services:

Mental health and overall well-being are significant predictors of academic success. This means that learning how to cope with stress and anxiety is an important part of your college experience. Please familiarize yourself with the range of resources offered at the Barnes Center (<https://ese.syr.edu/bewell/>) Counseling services are available 24/7, 365 days a year at 315-443-8000.