

Philosophy 10200: Introduction to Philosophy  
SYLLABUS

*As of Thursday, March 19: Online*

(This is a revised syllabus to reflect changes going into effect for the online remainder of the course.)

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Office Hours: W 2:30-3:30

Let's talk over e-mail or Zoom.

**Course Overview**

What is a mind? What makes each of us the same person over time? What kinds of things can think? How can we tell if another person, or a machine, has a mind? What does it take to have moral standing, and what do we owe to creatures with moral standing? What is the relation between the human mind and the physical body? What is it for a human being to die? Is death bad for beings like us? Is it bad for other creatures in the same way? Can we make sense of the idea of surviving death or having an immortal life?

This class is an introduction to contemporary philosophy. We will focus on the five topics oriented by these questions: The Problem of Other Minds, The Mind-Body Problem, Personal Identity, Life and Death, and Interpersonal Obligation.

## Course Materials

Required: Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

Required: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Cottingham, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Cambridge)

Required: Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Grube Translation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Hackett)

Required: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Revised Edition, Gregor and Timmermann Translation, Cambridge)

Required: Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*

Optional: Dennett and Hofstadter, *The Mind's I*

All other readings will be made available on the course website.

## Difficulty

This course is introductory and assumes no prior background in philosophy. However, the material will be challenging. Doing well in the course requires sustained engagement with the ideas and arguments we discuss, careful and critical reading of challenging texts, and the development and exercise of the skills of philosophical writing. One cannot do well in a philosophy class without doing philosophy well. The point of this class is to begin to teach you how to do that.

To excel in this course, you should expect to:

- Do all assigned readings *and engage* (take notes, evaluate, etc.)
- Attend lecture *and engage* (take notes, ask questions, etc.)
- Work hard on assignments (and submit them on time)

## Course Requirements

1. One short, pass/fail paper and two graded papers.
2. Weekly reading responses.
3. Final Exam.
4. Regular lecture attendance.

The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- *Participation*: 10%
- *Short, Pass/Fail Paper*: 5%
- *First Graded Paper*: 10%
- *Reading Responses*: 30%
- *Second Graded Paper*: 20%
- *Final Exam*: 25%

## **Papers**

PASS/FAIL PAPER (1-2 pages)

Due Wednesday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59p.m. to Blackboard.

FIRST GRADED PAPER (3-4 pages)

Due Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:59p.m. to Blackboard.

SECOND GRADED PAPER (5-6 pages)

Due Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:59p.m. to Blackboard.

## **Exams**

FINAL EXAM

*Modified:* Take-Home. Due May 18<sup>th</sup> at 8pm.

## **Reading Responses**

Reading responses are due by 8pm on Tuesdays to the course website, on *one* of the week's readings that have not yet been covered in lecture. If you choose to submit a response to a reading scheduled for a Monday lecture, it must be submitted by 8pm on Sunday of that week. Only ten total reading responses are required; only the first ten reading responses submitted will be graded.

Students should write a *brief* (1-3 paragraph) summary of the reading and pose some good critical questions in response. This is designed to be straightforward if you have done the week's readings and are critically engaging with them. 1/3 of the points are determined by completion, 1/3 by the quality of the summary and 1/3 by the quality of the questions. Late reading responses are not accepted for credit under any circumstances; a reading response submitted late will earn 0/3 points.

*Amendment as of March 19:* Reading Responses for Week 8 through Week 15 may now be turned in until 11:59 pm on Thursday of Week 16 (May 14<sup>th</sup>) with no late penalty. Reading responses will not be accepted after May 14<sup>th</sup>. If the reading has been covered in lecture by the time you submit reading response on it for Weeks 8-15, you will still be able to earn 2/3 points and can earn a full 3/3 points if your critical questions/discussion clearly goes beyond rehashing material from lecture and the reading in a way that moves the conversation forward.

Students also now need only do 9 reading responses for the term. 3 points will be added to everyone's reading response score if they have done at least one reading response by May 14<sup>th</sup>. The Blackboard survey about online instruction counts as one of the 9 reading responses for those who did it. Completion earns 3 points.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students are responsible for abiding by CCNY's policies regarding academic and intellectual integrity: <https://www.ccnycuny.edu/about/integrity>.

Any suspected plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Officer.

If you are found to have plagiarized, the penalty will be a failing grade in the course. The College or University may pursue other disciplinary measures, including expulsion.

## **General Education Course Objectives**

(Hopefully this is mostly clear from the rest of the syllabus, but this is, put very explicitly, as required for this course, what to expect from this course in light of the Gen Ed requirements it satisfies.)

### **A. Course Goals:**

- Oral & Communication Skills: Students will have had multiple experiences in communicating ideas in writing and speaking.
- Critical Analysis: Students will have had experiences that emphasize analytic and philosophical reasoning to critically examine fundamental questions of epistemology, religion, and ethics.
- Information Literacy: Students will have had multiple experiences in finding information in the library, on the Internet, and in other places, and in evaluating the reliability of this information.

### **B. Course Outcomes:**

- *Read* philosophy; that is, to identify the thesis of a piece of philosophical writing and the arguments or evidence adduced in support of that thesis
- *Write* philosophy; that is, to present a claim in clear terms and to defend it in a logically coherent manner
- *Reconstruct* and *debate* some foundational issues in the Western philosophical tradition

### **C. Writing Requirements**

- At least 3500 words of *finished* writing (~11 pages of 12-pt TNR, 1.5-spaced)
- At least one 3-page *critical* essay (~1000 words; may count towards the 3500)

## Other Course Policies

- Students needing an academic accommodation because of a disability should notify the AccessAbility Center/Student Disability Services and the instructor within the first two weeks of the quarter.
  - The AAC/SDS is at Room 1/218, 160 Convent Avenue; its phone number is (212) 650-5913.
- Late papers will be docked by **one-third of a letter grade**, and docked an additional third of a letter grade every twenty-four hours after the due date.
- Late papers will not be accepted after seven days beyond the due date.
- No extensions will be granted within 24 hours of a deadline or after the deadline has passed.

## **Electronics**

This class has a no-electronics policy. Please do not use cell phones, laptops, tablet computers, etc. during lecture. Please be in touch with the instructor before the quarter begins if there is a special reason why you may need to use a laptop during our class. Violation of this policy may affect your participation grade as a form of negative participation, especially if it distracts other students, in the following way:

Each observed instance of using an electronic device during lecture will result in a one-point penalty taken from your total potential 10 participation points for the term. If I ask you to put your device away or remind you of the Electronics Policy and you do not put your device away, there will be a two-point penalty. If you persistently violate the no-electronics policy, your participation grade will be a 0/10.

## **Participation**

I will keep track of your participation in class throughout the term. Your participation grade will be determined by the quality of your contribution to class discussions, which includes, to some degree, the frequency of your contributions. Regular, typically excellent participation will earn an A. Infrequent but good participation will earn a B. Generally negative contributions or extremely infrequent participation will earn a grade of C or lower. Participation that is more mixed in terms of frequency or quality will fall somewhere in between these benchmarks. If your contribution to the class is typically distracting or disruptive, you will earn an F. Attendance is a factor, though attendance on any particular date is not required, except for exam dates.

*Note from March 19: posts and responses on the discussion forum count as class participation. If any larger groups get together with me over Zoom for office hours or review sessions, participation there will count as well.*

## **Attendance**

Attendance will affect your participation grade, but it is not the case that you will be penalized for missing any particular lecture. Students who do not attend any of the first four lectures are unable to pass the class. If you do not regularly attend lecture throughout the course, you will not pass the class.

*Note from March 19:* From this point forward, attendance will take the form of participation in the online discussion forum during class time, but posts at other times will factor in as well. Remember, that time is now reserved for class-wide discussion. Respond to one another's posts.

## **Online Content**

Each week, by the time our scheduled lecture time begins on Monday and Wednesday, I will upload pre-recorded videos covering specific topics, readings, arguments, etc. The expectation for the online portion of the course is that you will do the readings prior to watching the videos and watch the videos before or during our scheduled meeting time, then meet online on a live discussion forum on Blackboard during that time.

Videos will be available at least through the scheduled lecture time for that material, but I can make no guarantee that videos will be available for any particular amount of time after that. Thus, you are strongly advised to do your best to watch them before or during our live discussion.

You are instructed not to download or share class video or audio recordings in any way with any other person, aside from interactions with other classmates. You are not to share written lecture material posted to the website (including outlines, notes, quizzes, review sheets, and slides) with anyone outside of our class.

## Course Schedule (subject to change)

### Week 1: Introduction, Philosophical Method

Read (M): Carrie Jenkins, “The Philosophy of Flirting”

Read (M): Daniel Nolan, “The Varieties of Flirtatious Experience”

Read (W): Plato, *Euthyphro*

### Week 2: Selves, Souls, and Minds

Read (M): Plato, *Apology* and *Phaedo*

Read (W): “The Soul of the Mark III Beast”, in *The Mind’s I*

Read (W): Egan, “Learning to Be Me”

Read (W): Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *The Mind’s I* Ch. 4

Optional: *The Mind’s I* Chapter 5

### Week 3: Cartesian Skepticism

Read (M): Descartes’ First Meditation and Second Meditation

**\*\*PASS/FAIL PAPER DUE TUES FEB 12<sup>th</sup> AT 11:59 p.m. TO BLACKBOARD\*\***

### Week 4: Descartes’ Philosophy of Mind

Optional (W): Descartes Meditation 6, Objections and Replies Selections

Read (W): Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia Selections

### Week 5: More Epistemology, Functionalism

Read (M): Moore, “Proof of an External World”

Read (M): Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States”

Read (W): Block, “Troubles with Functionalism” excerpts

Read (W): Putnam, “Brains in a Vat”

Optional (W): Block, “What is Functionalism?”

Optional (W): Block, “The Mind as the Software of the Brain”

### Week 6: Intentionality and Consciousness

Read (M): Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”

Optional (M): Burge, “Individualism and the Mental”

Optional (W): *Mind’s I* Chapter 13, Dennett, “Where Am I?”

Read (W): Nagel, “What is it Like to Be a Bat?”

Read (W): Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia”

**\*\* PAPER ONE DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 6<sup>th</sup> AT 11:59 p.m. TO BLACKBOARD\*\***

Week 7: Immortality, Personal Identity

Read (M): Perry's *Dialogue*, First Night  
Read (M): Perry's *Dialogue*, Second Night

Read (W): Perry's *Dialogue*, Third Night  
Optional (W): Williams, "The Self and the Future"  
Read (W): Parfit, "The Unimportance of Identity"

Week 8 (*Week of 3/23*): Moral Philosophy: Kant

Read (M): Kant's *Groundwork*, Preface

Read (W): Kant's *Groundwork*, Section I

Week 9 (*Week of 4/6*): Moral Philosophy: Utilitarianism

Read (M): Kant's *Groundwork*, Section II (up to page 45)  
Optional (M): Kant's *Groundwork*, Section III  
Optional (M): Korsgaard, "Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency"

Read (T): *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Part I (Sections 1-7)  
Optional (T): *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Part II  
Optional (T): Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"

Week 10 (*Week of 4/13—original Spring Break*): Life and Death

Optional (M): Epicurus and Lucretius, Extracts  
Read (M): Nagel, "Death"

Read (W): Williams, "The Makropulos Case" Excerpts

Week 11 (*Week of 4/20*): Death

Read (M): Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire* Chapter 6 Excerpts

Read (W): Velleman, "Well-Being and Time"  
Read (W): Harman, "The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death"

**\*\*PAPER TWO DUE Friday, APRIL 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 p.m. TO BLACKBOARD\*\***

Week 12 (*Week of 4/27*) The Value of Life and Control Over One's Death

**\*NO CLASS MONDAY 4/27\***

Optional (W): The Philosophers' Brief  
Read (W): Kamm, "A Right to Choose Death?"

Week 13 (*Week of 5/4*): Concluding Death; The Nature of the Lie

Read (M): Velleman, "A Right to Self-Termination?"

Read (W): Carson, "The Definition of Lying"

Week 14 (*Week of 5/11*): The Wrong of the Lie: Kantian Approaches

Read (M): G.J. Warnock, "The Object of Morality," p. 84

Read (M): Mill, excerpt

Read (M): Harry Frankfurt, "The Faintest Passion"

Read (W): Kant, "On the Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy"

Read (M): Korsgaard, "On the Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing With Evil"

Extra Readings: The Wrong of the Lie (continued) and Promissory Obligation

Optional: Shiffrin, "Lies and the Murderer Next Door"

Optional: Thomson, "Giving One's Word"

Optional: Prichard, "Promises and Practices"

Optional: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* section 52

Optional: Scanlon, "Promises and Practices"

**\*\*TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE MAY 18<sup>th</sup> AT 8:00 p.m. ON BLACKBOARD\*\***