

PHIL 101:

Introduction to Philosophy

Spring 2018

8:00-8:50 am, Caldwell 105

Instructor: Joanna Lawson

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Office hours: 11-12 Mondays and 3-4 Tuesdays, and by appointment

Course description

This course will teach students to read, write, and think philosophically. Some topics studied will include: what we can know for certain about reality, whether we can find meaning in life, and how we ought to live in the world.

Learning objectives

By the end of this course, students will be familiar with several of the main debates in philosophy. They will be able to read philosophical articles carefully enough to charitably reconstruct a paper's central arguments. Furthermore, they will be able to critically assess arguments, providing possible objections and responses to objections. They will develop their own understanding of philosophical topics and will be able to present arguments to support their conclusions.

Course Requirements

Preparation: You are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings carefully and critically.

Attendance and Participation: To do well in this class, you will need to attend regularly and engage in active participation. Part of adequate participation includes reading the assigned course material ahead of time. It also includes listening actively to and engaging respectfully with the other students in the class.

You may disagree with the conclusions of any of the readings in this class, but disagreement does not give license to dismiss. This is especially important in philosophy, which, rather than being a combative hurling of rhetoric in pursuit of personal victory, ought to be a collaborative effort in search of deeper understanding, and truth. You are more likely to come to the right conclusions if you are able to listen to others and allow their views to challenge how you think.

Electronics: Turn off all electronic devices (computers, phones, tablets, etc.) prior to the beginning of class, unless otherwise instructed. Use of such devices will result in a zero for participation for the day.

Assignments

Assignment	Weight
Class participation	15%
Reading responses	15%
Paper #1 (3-4 pages*)	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Paper #2 (5-7 pages*)	25%
Final Exam	15%
Extra credit poster project	Extra credit (up to 3% of final grade)

*Written work for this course must total at least ten pages

Class participation: To get full points for participation, you should participate in class conversation at least once a class period. Just attending class is not enough. Every time you talk, your comments should be (a) relevant, (b) coherent, and (c) respectful. Consistent failure to comply with any of these requirements will result in a poor participation grade. **If you worry that you will struggle to fulfill the participation requirement, please let me know.**

Reading responses: At the beginning of most class periods there will be a reading response question, based on the reading assigned for the day, which you will answer in class and turn in to me. These will each be graded out of 10 points. I will award fewer than 6 points if it is unclear whether you have done the reading, I will award 6 points if it is clear that you have done the reading, but misunderstood it. I will award 8 points for passable understanding of the reading, and 10 points for superior understanding. At the end of term, I will drop your lowest three reading response scores.

Paper #1: You will write one 3-4 page paper in which you critically assess an argument presented in class (either in the readings or in discussion). After reconstructing the argument, you will provide one or two objections to it. Then, you will either respond to the objections you provide, or explain why you think that the objections undermine the original argument. Both papers should be typed (12-pt font, double spaced, 1-in margins) and emailed to me by midnight on the due date. The papers will be assessed for accuracy in reconstructing the original argument, strength of objections, quality of critical thought, and quality of writing. You will have the option to rewrite this paper based on the comments you receive from me.

Paper #2: You will write one 5-7 page paper in which you take a stand on an issue relating to one of the in-class readings. You should state your view clearly, give reasons to think that your view is correct, and address at least one possible objection to your position. Papers will be assessed for organization, critical thought, plausibility of objections, responses to objections, and quality of writing.

Midterm exam: The midterm will consist of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

Final exam: The final exam will consist of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

Extra credit poster project: This is an optional project worth extra credit. Depending on the quality of the project, each student who completes it may earn credit worth up to 3% of the overall course grade. Together with a group of up to three other students, you will create and present a poster which applies a topic covered in class to a recent event, a piece of popular culture (a TV show, movie, musical album, or book), or a piece of art (a play, opera, painting, famous book, etc.). Projects other than posters are allowed with prior permission of the instructor.

Grading policies

Late work: Due dates for assignments are firm. For every 24-hour period that an assignment is late, the assignment will be docked one full letter grade (10%). If you have arranged for an extension in advance, this policy does not apply.

Extensions: I allow pre-arranged extensions. If you think you need an extension on an assignment, please contact me *at least* 24 hours in advance.

Anonymous grading: For the two papers and the exams, I will grade work without knowing who the author is. This means you shouldn't put any identifying information on them, other than your PID. You also shouldn't use distinctive formatting or fonts: 12 pt, double-spaced, Times New roman, please. I know it makes your paper look kind of boring, but fancy styles threaten anonymity.

Assignment submission: Written assignments are to be turned in via email (to jrlawson@live.unc.edu) by midnight on the due date.

Honor code: Students are expected to abide by the UNC Honor Code at all times. You are responsible for understanding the terms of the Honor Code, and for understanding what constitutes plagiarism (see <http://studentconduct.unc.edu> for more information).

You may not submit work for this class that has previously been submitted for another class. If you are ever unsure whether your work complies with ethical standards of academic integrity, please come see me or visit <http://studentconduct.unc.edu> for more information.

Grading scale:

A-range (90-93 = A-, 94-100 = A): Work that earns an A grade demonstrates insightful engagement with the course material and impressive mastery of central concepts. Argument reconstructions show attention to detail, are sensitive to nuance, and highlight the importance of the central dialectical moves in the piece. Criticisms are insightful, original, and particularly well developed. Writing is not only clear, but beautiful.

B-range (80-83 = B-, 84-86 = B, 87-89 = B+): Work that earns a B grade demonstrates competence and thoughtful engagement with the course material. Argument reconstructions are accurate and highlight the most important dialectical moves in the piece. Criticisms are thoughtful and well developed. Writing is clear and pithy.

C-range (70-73 = C-, 74-76 = C, 77-79 = C+): Work that earns a C grade demonstrates adequate comprehension and engagement with course material. Argument reconstructions are mostly accurate. Criticisms are relevant to the course material, but may lack development. Writing may demonstrate some problems with organization or structure, but is intelligible.

D-range (60-66 = D, 67-79 = D+): Work that earns a D grade demonstrates a lack of comprehension of and engagement with the course material. Argument reconstructions are inaccurate. Criticisms are irrelevant or fallacious. Writing is unstructured and often difficult to understand.

Course schedule

This schedule is subject to change, depending on time constraints. I will announce all changes in advance over email and in class.

Date	Topic	Required Readings	Assignments
1/10 (Wed)	Introduction	Course overview.	Paper 1 prompt distributed
1/12 (Fri)	Appearance and Reality	Plato's, "The Allegory of the Cave". Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book VII, 514a-521d	
1/15 (Mon)		NO CLASS	
1/17 (Wed)		Plato's, "Apology"	
1/19 (Fri)		Descartes' <i>Meditations</i> . Meditation 1.	
1/22 (Mon)		Descartes' <i>Meditations</i> . Meditation 2.	
1/24 (Wed)		Grau, "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and the Matrix"	
1/26 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
1/29 (Mon)	Finding meaning in life	Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"	
1/31 (Wed)		Nagel, "The Absurd"	
2/2 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
2/5 (Mon)		Wolf, "The Meaning of Lives"	Paper #1 due by midnight
2/7 (Wed)	Epistemology and philosophy of religion	Pascal, "The Wager"	

2/9 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
2/12 (Mon)		Adams, "Problems of Evil"	Paper #1 rewrite due by midnight
2/14 (Wed)		Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements"	
2/16 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
2/19 (Mon)	Experience and revelation	Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"	
2/21 (Wed)		Paul, <i>Transformative Experience</i> , chapters 1 and 2	
2/23 (Fri)		MIDTERM EXAM	
2/26 (Mon)	The Problem of Induction	Hume's <i>Treatise</i> . Book I, Part III, sec. VI.	Paper #2 assigned
2/28 (Wed)		Harman and Kulkarni, "The Problem of Induction"	
3/2 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
3/5 (Mon)	Free Will	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> I.14.13, "Whether the Knowledge of God is of Future Contingent Things?"	
3/7 (Wed)		Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will"	
3/9 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
3/12- 3/16		SPRING BREAK	
3/19 (Mon)		Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"	
3/21 (Wed)		van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will"	
3/23 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	Paper #2 due by midnight
3/26 (Mon)	Ethics	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , 358e-361d	

3/28 (Wed)		Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"	
3/30 (Fri)		NO CLASS	
4/2 (Mon)		Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"	
4/4 (Wed)		Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"	
4/6 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
4/9 (Mon)	Gender, Race, Oppression	Frye, "Oppression"	
4/11 (Wed)		Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?"	
4/13 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	Extra credit poster project assigned
4/16 (Mon)		King, "Letter From Birmingham Jail"	
4/18 (Wed)		Crenshaw, Intersectionality TED Talk (available on Sakai or Youtube)	
4/20 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	
4/23 (Mon)		Bettcher, "Trans Women and the Meaning of 'Woman'"	
4/25 (Wed)		Review (no assigned reading)	
4/27 (Fri)		(No assigned reading)	Extra credit poster project presentations
5/4 (Fri)		FINAL EXAM (4:00 PM)	