

Introduction to Philosophy

Spring Term 2022

Course Information

Course Code: PHIL 210
Class Times: Monday 10:30–12:00 (Room 303), Thursday 10:30–12:00 (Room 303)
Instructor: Dr. Mirja Annalena Holst
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Course Description

This course aims to provide an introduction to some major themes in philosophy. We will approach these themes by examining philosophical paradoxes and puzzling thought experiments. By thinking about these puzzling cases, students will get a sense of what philosophy is, what sorts of problems it aims to solve, and how it goes about solving them. We will discuss questions in metaphysics (e.g. ‘What is time and space?’), philosophy of mind (e.g. ‘Is mind material?’), ethics (e.g. ‘What is morally right and wrong?’), decision theory (e.g. ‘How do we ought to make decisions?’), epistemology (e.g. ‘What is knowledge?’), philosophy of religion (e.g. ‘Does God exist?’), and philosophy of logic and language (e.g. ‘What is meaning and truth?’).

Course Aims

This course aims to provide students with basic knowledge of philosophical terms, methods, and essential themes, and to help them develop analytic and critical thinking skills.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will ...

- understand what the core questions in philosophy are
- understand what the core concepts in philosophy are
- understand what the main positions on some of the core questions in philosophy are
- understand what the main arguments for and against these positions are
- understand the method of philosophical analysis and argument
- be able to defend a philosophical position in discussion
- be able to write a paper defending a philosophical position

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students will be assessed on the basis of attendance and participation, two short essays, and a final exam.

Assessment

- Attendance and Participation 10%
- Two Short Essays 60% (each 30%)
- Final Exam 30%

Attendance and Participation

This course focuses on discussions, and it is important that you actively participate in them. You should come to all classes. If you do miss classes, this will decrease your grade (unless you have a reasonable excuse for your absence, shown e.g. by a medical certificate).

Two Short Essays

The two short essays are to be written during the term and each essay should be 1000 to 1500 words long. The first essay is due on 10.03.2022, and the second essay is due on 11.04.2022. You will get the topics for the essays about three weeks before their due date. The essays should be submitted to me via email by their respective due dates.

Final Exam

The final exam takes place on 09.05.2022. It consists of 20 questions, including multiple choice questions and short answer questions, and you have 90 minutes to complete it.

Grading

Course letter grades are assigned at the end of the semester based on the standard scale:

- A 90 – 100%
- B 80 – 89%
- C 70 – 79%
- D 60 – 69%
- F 00 – 59%

There will be no make-up exam or assignment, and no extra assignment for extra credit.

Readings

We will read passages from various philosophical books and articles. All course texts will be available on our Microsoft Team. In addition to doing the assigned readings, you should study the lecture slides, which will be uploaded to Microsoft Team after each class. A good introduction to philosophy book is:

- Rosen, Gideon, et al (2018): *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., New York: Norton.

Please feel free to ask me for recommendations if you want to read more.

Preliminary Schedule

Please note that there might be changes to the preliminary schedule.

Introduction

- 1 10.01. Introduction -

Metaphysics

- 2 13.01. Zeno's Paradoxes Clark, 'Achilles and the Tortoise'
- 3 17.01. Time Travel Lewis, 'The Paradoxes of Time Travel'
- 4 20.01. Ship of Theseus Clark, 'The Ship of Theseus'
- 5 24.01. Statue and Clay Sider, 'Constitution'
- 6 14.02. Personal Identity Locke, 'Of Identity and Diversity'

Philosophy Essay Writing

- 7 17.02. Philosophy Essay Writing -
- 8 21.02. Philosophy Essay Writing -

Philosophy of Mind

- 9 24.02. Dualism, Physicalism, and Qualia Descartes, 'Meditation II'
- 10 28.02. Knowledge Argument Jackson, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia'
- 11 03.03. Artificial Intelligence Searle, 'Minds, Brains, and Programs'

Ethics

- 12 07.03. Trolley Problem Thomson, 'The Trolley Problem'
- 13 10.03. Overpopulation (ESSAY 1 DUE) Parfit, 'The Repugnant Conclusion'
- 14 14.03. Moral Luck Kant, 'Groundwork of ...'

Midterm

- 15 17.03. Midterm Review -
- 16 21.03. Philosophy Essay Discussion -

Decision Theory

- 17 24.03. Prisoners' Dilemma Clark, 'Prisoners' Dilemma'
- 18 28.03. Newcomb's Problem Clark, 'Newcomb's Problem'
- 19 31.03. Intransitive Preferences Clark, 'The Paradox of Preference'

Epistemology

- 20 04.04. Analysis of Knowledge Plato, 'Meno'
- 21 07.04. Cartesian Scepticism Descartes, 'Meditation I'
- 22 11.04. Induction (ESSAY 2 DUE) Russell, 'On Induction'
- 23 14.04. Lottery Paradox Clark, 'The Lottery'

Philosophy of Religion

- 24 18.04. Pascal's Wager Pascal, 'Pensées'
- 25 21.04. Problem of Evil Rachels, 'The Problem of Evil'
- 26 25.04. Death Epicurus, 'Letter to Menoecus'

Logic and Language

- 27 28.04. Vagueness Russell, 'Vagueness'
- 28 02.05. Truth Priest, 'Beyond True and False'

Final

- 29 05.05. Final Review -
 - 30 09.05. FINAL EXAM -
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