

PHIL 102: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Lewis and Clark College
Fall 2022

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Classroom: Miller 105
Meeting time: MWF 12:40-1:40
Office hours: MW 2-3

Basic course information

- The course is hosted on Moodle. You should have been added automatically.
- Most of the readings will be linked or available as PDFs on Moodle. But you will need to purchase Amy Kind's *Persons and Personal Identity* (ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-5431-7) and Ted Chiang's *Exhalation* (ISBN 978-1-5290-1449-5). Both will be on reserve at the library, but they can also be ordered either from Powell's or Amazon. The total cost should be under \$50.

Course description

Course content: The primary aim of this course is to introduce some central philosophical problems. Some are contemporary, but most have deep historical routes in many traditions. I have chosen a set of problems that I believe are important, representative of what the discipline of philosophy looks like, and thematically linked. Investigating these problem requires and rewards curiosity and intellectual humility, and will allow us to develop and deploy philosophical tools, methods, skills, and habits of thought.

Each topic can be approached via a corresponding question that we will try to answer:

Part I: Morality

1. Moral Status: Which beings matter morally, why, and how much?
2. Good and Bad: What is good and bad for those beings that have moral status?
3. Right and Wrong: What makes an act morally permissible, impermissible, or required?
4. The State: What is the proper role of a state with respect to those under its power?
5. Responding to Wrongdoing: How should we respond to individuals who misbehave?

Part II: Us (Human Beings)

6. Fallibility: How does our fallibility and frailty shape our deliberations, actions, reactions, and ways of engaging with others?
7. Free Will and Moral Responsibility: What, if anything, makes a person free and responsible for their behavior?
8. Identity and Death: What makes one the same person across time?
9. Race and Gender: What are race and gender and what is their significance?
10. Human Nature and Utopia: Is there such a thing as human nature and (how) can it change? How do utopias reflect assumptions about human nature and nature itself?

Part III: The Universe and God

11. The Cosmological Argument: Must God exist and what would that imply about the universe and us?
12. The Problem of Evil: What is God like and what does that mean for human beings?

Dates	Topic	Readings + Assignments	Length
8/29	Introduction	Introducing the course and the practice of philosophy	0
8/31 - 9/7	Moral Status	Read L. Gruen "Why Animals Matter" (pp.25-33) Read A. Leopold "The Land Ethic" [9/5] LABOR DAY, NO CLASS Read T. Chiang "The Lifecycle of Software Objects" (meeting on Zoom)	8 19 111
9/9 - 9/14	Good + Bad	Read G.E. Moore "Two Worlds" (recorded lectures + online discussion) Read R.Y. Chappell and D. Meissner "Theories of Well-Being" (guest lecture by Professor Joel Martinez) Read M.C. Nussbaum "The Central Capabilities" (pp.18-36) Assignment 1: receive 9/14	4 10 18
9/16 - 9/21	Right + Wrong	Read B. Eggleston "Act Utilitarianism" Read P. Foot "Killing and Letting Die" Read P. Singer "Is It Wrong Not to Help?"	20 11 10
9/23 - 9/28	The State	Read W.E.B. Du Bois - "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" Read J. Rawls <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (selections) Assignment 1: due 9/26 Read G.A. Cohen, R. Nozick, S.M. Okin, E. Anderson, C. Mills (summaries)	9 21 10
9/30 - 10/7	Responding to Wrongdoing	Read D.J. Coates - "The Ethics of Blame: A Primer" Read H. Tierney - "Don't Burst My Blame Bubble" Application and discussion Assignment 2: receive 10/5 [10/7] FALL BREAK, NO CLASS	25 36 0
10/10 - 10/14	Human Fallibility + Frailty	Read T. Chiang "The Truth of Fact, the Truth of Feeling" Read J. May and V. Kumar "Harnessing Moral Psychology to Reduce Meat Consumption" Read L.A. Paul "Becoming a Vampire"	46 21 5
10/17 - 10/24	Free Will + Responsibility	Read G. Strawson "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" Read S. Wolf "Insanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" Read D.K. Nelkin "Difficulty and Degrees of Moral Praiseworthiness and Blameworthiness" (§1-2 and §5-7) Application and discussion Assignment 2: due 10/24	20 16 16 0

Dates	Topic	Readings + Assignments	Length
10/26 - 11/2	Identity + Death	Read Egan "Learning to Be Me" Read Kind <i>Persons and Personal Identity</i> (chap 2) Read Kind <i>Persons and Personal Identity</i> (chap 3) Application and discussion	15 25 22 0
11/4 - 11/9	Race + Gender	Read Hacking "Making Up People" Read M.O. Hardimon "Four Ways of Thinking About Race" Read M. Mikkola "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender" (§1-3) + (optional) Listen to A. Srinivasan "What is a Woman?" (Philosophy Bites) Assignment 3: receive 11/9	11 11 20 (20 min)
11/11 - 11/16	Human Nature + Utopia	Read D.J. Baker "The Intended" (meeting on Zoom) <i>TBD</i> Read M. Midgley "Human Nature, Human Variety, Human Freedom"	20 17
11/18 - 11/21	Cosmological Argument	Read (or listen) P. Adamson on Ibn Sina (Avicenna) "By Any Means Necessary" + P. Adamson on Al-Ghazali "Miracle Worker" <i>TBD</i>	14
11/23 - 11/30	Problem of Evil	Read E. Stump "Knowledge, Freedom, and the Problem of Evil" Assignment 3: due 11/23 [11/25] THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS Read T. Chiang "Hell Is the Absence of God" Read H.M. Turner "A Remarkable Letter" + (optional) Listen to P. Adamson and C. Jeffers "God is a Negro: Henry McNeal Turner" (History of Africana Philosophy)	10 32 1 (22 min)
12/2 - 12/5	Conclusion	Discussion and Review Discussion and Review	0 0
12/7 - 12/13	Reading Days + Final Exam	[12/7] Reading Day [12/9] Reading Day [12/13] FINAL EXAM: 8:30-11:30AM	0 0

Course expectations

Learning outcomes: This is a course in philosophy and my goals are the same as the department's goals (see learning outcomes). In particular, by the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Identify and assess claims by critically determining the logical relations between them.
- Identify and explain philosophical puzzles and problems.
- Appreciate the value of philosophical thinking, reading, interpretation, and conversation.
- Use philosophical tools and methods, including conceptual analysis and thought experiments.

- Assess the relative merits of competing theories according to criteria like coherence, consistency, conservativeness, simplicity, predictive success, and common sense.
- Read philosophical texts critically but charitably; identify, understand, and assess the adequacy of arguments, explanations and hypotheses.
- Write effective, informed and insightful philosophical prose.
- Verbally engage in cooperative philosophical dialogue and communication.
- Engage contemporary and historical philosophical conversations about philosophical problems.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Students who require accommodation should inform me as far in advance as possible if they will need to miss class. The final exam will cover material both from class and readings and lectures will often introduce material not in the readings. Reading checks will also take place in class and cannot be made up.

Of course, safety precautions around COVID-19 complicates the issue of attendance. Please do not come to class if you think you're sick. We can always work around your need to miss class. If you are advised to self-isolate (due to symptoms and pending medical consultation or testing), isolate (due to positive test result), or quarantine (because you have tested positive for COVID or are unvaccinated and have been exposed), contact me as soon as possible. Based on your specific situation, we will work out an appropriate plan for making up missed classes and assignments.

Preparation: Students are expected to come to class with an adequate understanding of the arguments made in the readings. Students should also be prepared to discuss, analyze, and evaluate the assigned readings and are encouraged to present arguments of their own. Learning philosophy is inseparable from doing philosophy.

Engagement: Be curious and explore what you're curious about. No one is curious about everything, but explore the topics and dig in to what attracts your interest.

Be critical. In order to understand philosophical theories, including your own, you must ask questions about them, raise objections to them, and revise and refine them in response to problems. We all have philosophical theories even if we haven't articulated them, so one way to be critical is to clarify your own views to yourself.

Be considerate and respectful of one another. Taking a critical approach to a text or a position does not license being dismissive or disrespectful. Our aim is to clarify, support, and develop views on the issues we discuss. Basic respect requires taking others seriously and considering how to make our conversations as valuable as possible for all of us. Care and consideration are especially important because we will be discussing some controversial topics that people are likely to care deeply about. In this context, it is essential that we build and maintain trust over the course of the semester. I will try to earn your trust and I expect you all to do so as well. This can be done in small ways (like learning one another's names) and big ways (like trying to fix an argument before rejecting it).

Be charitable with one another and with the texts we read. One kind of charity applies to interpreting others beliefs and arguments. The authors we read are smart, thoughtful people. A good rule of thumb is this: if you see a problem with their view, they probably have too, so try to see (or imagine) how they might respond to your objection. Another kind of charity applies to our interactions with each other, both in person and virtually. It is a kind of grace, a presumption of good will and a recognition that we all make mistakes but also are able to learn from them. Responding with charity others' mistakes—minor slights or offenses—provides a foundation for trust and for the kind of comfort necessary to explore difficult and controversial questions.

Assignments and Assessment: You will be assessed in four ways.

1. Class participation (20%, max 20 points): this will be judged on a scale of 1-10 (from not participating to participating optimally); at the end of the semester you will receive a score from me, a score from your classmates, and a score from yourself; the lowest score will be thrown out and your grade will be the sum of the other two scores.

Why is this important? Participating in class is how you contribute to your own and others' understanding of the topic. Both quantity and quality are important, but optimal participation does not require joining *every* conversation or having a *completely* developed view on the topic. Useful contributions may be that simple question no one was willing to ask, an essential clarification, an observation based on your own experience, or drawing a connection to another topic, class, or area of knowledge. Most opportunities for participation will be in class, but this is not the only way. There will be online discussion threads and you can also chat with me and others during office hours.

You will be involved in grading because you're also a competent judge of how well you and your fellow students have contributed to your learning.

2. Reading checks (20%, max 20 points): these will be short (1-2 paragraphs); there will be 12 of them during the semester (1/topic); the first 2 will be for practice and ungraded, the other 10 will be graded; half will be graded by me, half by a classmate chosen at random; they will be graded 0 (not done), 1 (done), or 2 (done well).

Why are these important? The goal of reading checks is to encourage close engagement with the texts, to prepare a contribution to class discussion, and to practice philosophical writing. These will guide our conversations and help us delve deeper into the day's topic.

3. Short assignments (30%, max 30 points): these will be longer assignments (1-2 pages, single-spaced); there will be 3 of them due during the semester; each will be worth a maximum of 10 points; they will be graded by me; each will target different philosophical skills. (Some will be written assignments, but they need not be.)

Why are these important? Short assignments like this allow you to practice philosophical skills (e.g., reconstructing an argument, explaining a problem, formulating an objection, or interpreting a text).

4. Final exam (30%, max 30 points): this will be an in-person exam; it will feature short answer, long answer, and essay questions.

Why have an exam? A final exam can test your knowledge of the material covered by the course, but also allow you to demonstrate your ability to think through an unfamiliar philosophical problem.

Some exam questions will simply test the knowledge you've acquired during the course. Others will test your ability to reconstruct and critique an argument. Still others will ask you to apply your philosophical skills to new and strange philosophical problems. Each kind of question will mirror kinds of questions that we have discussed during the course.

I will explain each assignment in more detail when they come due during the semester.

Unexcused late work will be marked down. Some assignments cannot be accepted late at all—e.g., the purpose of a reading check is partly to produce an initial contribution to a particular day's discussion. However, I realize that sometimes turning in an assignment late will be much more valuable than turning it in on time, so please speak to me—as far in advance as possible—if you need some accommodation.

A = 93%-100%
A- = 90%-92%
B+ = 86%-89%
B = 83%-85%
B- = 80%-82%
C+ = 76%-79%

C = 73%-75%
C- = 70%-72%
D+ = 66%-69%
D = 60%-65%
F = 0%-59%

The deadline to withdraw from the course is November 4. By that point you will have received scores for two short papers, at least half of your reading checks, and should be able to make an informed guess about your participation score. That's about 40% of your total grade for the course.

Assistance and Accommodation: Please see me if there are accommodations that could help you learn more effectively in this class or if you are experiencing barriers to accessibility in our class. Some kinds of accommodations may require documentation through the Office of Student Accessibility (OSA). If you plan to take exams in the OSA office, please schedule with them and let me know well in advance of the exam.

Academic Integrity: Please review the college's official policy on academic integrity. If you're unsure about anything, please ask. It is your responsibility to understand these policies and abide by them.

Plagiarism, cheating on exams, inappropriate use of online resources, and unauthorized collaboration on assignments are all serious violations of appropriate academic conduct. I take these and all other forms of academic misconduct very seriously. However, I want you to succeed in my course and I recognize that misconduct often happens when students are stressed and overwhelmed by their commitments, so please talk to me if you're worried about an assignment. And try to talk to me as far in advance as possible—e.g., if you have similar due dates for an assignment in another course. Together we can find a solution that gives you a real chance to do you best and helps you avoid misconduct.

Student Support Services:

- Counseling Services: https://www.lclark.edu/offices/counseling_service/
- COVID Information and Policy: <https://www.lclark.edu/news/covid-19-response/>
- Academic Support: <https://college.lclark.edu/academics/support/>
- College Advising Center: <https://college.lclark.edu/academics/support/advising/>
- Writing Center: https://college.lclark.edu/academics/support/writing_center/
- Library Help: <https://library.lclark.edu/help>
- Office of Student Accessibility: <https://www.lclark.edu/offices/student-accessibility/>
- Interactive Learning Center: https://college.lclark.edu/offices/interactive_learning_center/
- SAAB Tutoring: <https://college.lclark.edu/academics/support/advising/saab-tutoring/>