

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PROFESSOR: Dr. Blake Hereth (“Dr. H”)

EMAIL: sbhereth@uark.edu

E-OFFICE: Collaborate Ultra (Blackboard)

CLASS MEETINGS: MTWTHF 9:15AM-10:45AM CENTRAL STANDARD TIME (CST)

OFFICE HOURS: W 1-2pm (CST) and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Thales claims that the universe consisted entirely of water. Socrates says that the unexamined life isn't worth living. Aquinas believes each thing has a 'proper' function. And David Chalmers thinks your iPhone is part of your mind. Are any of them right? How would we even go about finding out? This course introduces you to big ideas in historical and contemporary philosophy—not just the old, dusty stuff, but the new, cutting-edge stuff. Beginning with methodology, we will cover a little of everything from ‘Do we know anything at all?’ to ‘Should we use gender-neutral pronouns for everyone?’ But this course is more than an introduction to these issues: It's also an invitation for you to contribute to the millennia-old enterprise of asking big questions and questioning big answers.

COURSE GOALS:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Associate major historical and contemporary philosophers with their big ideas.
- Explain the big ideas, why they matter, and what can be said in support of them.
- Use the readings and class discussions to identify opportunities for moral and intellectual growth, keep a written record of those opportunities, and pursue them.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class Participation (15%): Class will be held in Blackboard's Collaborate Ultra feature. Do the required readings carefully and come prepared to discuss them. Then, when in online class, discuss them. You won't receive credit just for being present.
- Content Quizzes (25%): Every day of class, there will be quizzes over class content. These may be questions about the (required) readings, in-class PowerPoints, or other content introduced during class. The lowest two quizzes will be dropped.
- Betterment Journal (30%): Each student will keep a journal over the course of the term, with entries being made for every class day. Each entry should be around 100 words and should describe how the day's readings revealed opportunities to become a better person morally or intellectually. The goal of this project is to find directed opportunities for personal growth, identifying creative ways of taking philosophical ideas to heart and thereby improving yourself. The journal should be submitted as a single document on Thursday, June 25th, by 5pm via Blackboard.

- Final Exam (30%): a comprehensive exam to be held Friday, June 26th, from 9-11 am CST.

GRADING SCALE:

I use a standard grading scale for this course:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89.99%
- C = 70-79.99%
- D = 60-69.99%
- F = 59.99 or below

TEXTBOOK(S):

- There is no textbook for this course. (Yay! Saving money!) All the readings are on Blackboard.

READING SCHEDULE:

(**NOTE:** THIS IS A *TENTATIVE* READING SCHEDULE. I MAY ADJUST IT DEPENDING ON NEED OR CLASS PROGRESS. **BOLDED** READINGS ARE REQUIRED; NON-BOLDED READINGS ARE OPTIONAL.)

WEEK 1 (MAY 24-28): COURSE INTRODUCTION & LOGIC

Readings:

- **Syllabus**
- **Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”**
- **Plato, *Republic*, Book VII**
- Logic Handouts

WEEK 2 (MAY 31-JUNE 4): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- **There is no class Monday, May 31st (Memorial Day)**
- **René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: Meditation I* (pp.6-8)**
- Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
- **Richard Feldman, *Epistemology***
- Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias” (sections 1 and 2)

WEEK 3 (JUNE 7-11): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- Peter van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings”
- Mari Mikkola, “Feminist Metaphysics and Philosophical Methodology”
- **Theodore Sider, “Time”**
- **“Correspondence Between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth”**
- Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”

WEEK 4 (JUNE 14-18): ETHICS & PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Readings:

- Robin Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes”
- **Travis Timmerman, “A Case for Removing Confederate Monuments”**
- Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
- Nick Trakakis, “The Evidential Problem of Evil” (available online)
- **Kathryn Pogin, “God is Not Male”**

WEEK 5 (JUNE 21-25): DISABILITY, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER

Readings:

- **Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, chapter 2 (pp.54-77)**
- Abigail Gosselin, “Mental Illness Stigma and Epistemic Credibility”
- John Corvino, “Homosexuality, Harm, and Moral Principles”
- **Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze” (sections 1, 2, and 4)**
- The Final Exam will be held Friday, June 25th, from 9-11am CST via Blackboard

POLICIES:

- Academic Integrity: As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is only possible when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail. Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University’s ‘Academic Integrity Policy’ which may be found at provost.uark.edu Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.
- Selling Notes: There are companies that will try to lure you into selling the notes you take in this class. Don’t let these companies take advantage of you. Selling my notes to any commercial service I will consider a violation of my intellectual property rights and/or copyright law as well as a violation of the U of A’s academic integrity policy. Continued enrollment in this class signifies intent to abide by the policy. Any violation will be reported to the Office of Academic Initiatives and Integrity.
- Respect of Self and Others: As a (mostly) consistent Kantian, I expect everyone in this course to maintain a certain level of self-respect. This means taking yourself seriously (although not *too* seriously) and avoiding excessive self-deprecation. You are valuable and an important part of the philosophical community. I also expect everyone in this course to maintain respect for others. Philosophical engagement is often aggressive and it’s easy to see why: Sometimes you develop a devastating objection to someone’s argument and you want to deliver it in epic fashion. But we won’t indulge those impulses here. It’s okay to care about the material and to discuss it passionately, but *don’t* interrupt others, *do* be equitable with your speaking time (and be aware that we’re often bad judges of when we’ve exceeded our equitable speaking time), *do* aim to help someone identify any flaws in their view *and* make suggestions for how they might improve it, and *do* respect others’ pronouns.
- Attendance: Education at the university level requires active involvement in the learning process. Therefore, students have the responsibility to attend classes and to actively

engage in all learning assignments or opportunities provided in their classes. Instructors have the responsibility to provide a written policy on student attendance that is tied to course objectives and included in a course syllabus. There may be times, however, when illness, family crisis, or university-sponsored activities make full attendance or participation impossible. In these situations, students are responsible for making timely arrangements with the instructor to make up work missed. Such arrangements should be made in writing and prior to the absence when possible. Examples of absences that should be considered excusable include those resulting from the following: (1) illness of the student, (2) serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family or other family crisis, (3) University-sponsored activities for which the student's attendance is required by virtue of scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, (4) religious observances (see Students' Religious Observances policy below), (5) jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, and (6) military duty. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused.

- Weather: When the University of Arkansas declares that the inclement weather policy is in effect, we won't meet for seminar. In such cases, and in any other case when class is cancelled, you will be notified via email or Blackboard. In cases of questionable whether, please check the university website.
- Disability Related Accommodation: University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (contact 479-575-3104 or visit cea.uark.edu for more information on registration procedures).
- Reminder About Concealed Carry on Campus: Handguns are only allowed on campus (including all classrooms) to the extent specifically authorized by state law. Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun and an enhanced carry permit is required to keep the handgun concealed from public view at all times and is responsible for carrying the handgun in a safe manner. If an individual carries a concealed handgun in a personal carrier such as a backpack, purse, or handbag, the carrier must remain within the individual's immediate vicinity (within arm's reach). During this course, you may be required to engage in activities that may require you to separate from your belongings such as taking a quiz or examination, and thus you should plan accordingly. Any student who violates the concealed carry laws while on campus may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or discipline by the University, up to and including dismissal. If you observe someone displaying a handgun or other weapon on campus, it should be reported to the University of Arkansas Police Department. For more information, please go to safety.uark.edu.
- Problems with the Course: If you have concerns or suggestions regarding this course, I encourage you to speak to me directly about them. If you would prefer to speak with someone else, however, you may contact:

Dr. Edward Minar
Chair, Department of Philosophy
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