

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PROFESSOR: Dr. Blake Hereth (“Dr. H”)

EMAIL: sbhereth@uark.edu

E-OFFICE: Collaborate Ultra (Blackboard)

CLASS MEETINGS: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30pm-1:45pm via Collaborate Ultra

E-OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 12-2pm 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 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 some 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 bit 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; and
- develop a big idea of their own and provide strong support for it.

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 (20%): There will be random 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.
- Midterm Exam (20%): an exam covering material from the first half of the course. The exam will be held on Blackboard on Thursday, October 15th, during regular class time.
- Term Paper (25%): Each student will develop a philosophical argumentative paper that explains and then makes an original argument regarding one of the topics we have covered. The paper is due Monday, December 14th, at 5pm on Blackboard.
- Final Exam (20%): an exam covering material from the second half of the course. The exam will be held on Blackboard on Tuesday, December 15th, from 12:30-2:30pm.

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.)

WEEK 1 (AUG 25 & 27): COURSE INTRODUCTION

Readings:

- Syllabus

WEEK 2 (SEP 1 & 3): VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

Readings:

- Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"
- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII

WEEK 3 (SEP 8 & 10): LOGIC

Readings:

- Logic Handouts

WEEK 4 (SEP 15 & 17): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditation I (pp.6-8)
- Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
- Richard Feldman, *Epistemology*

WEEK 5 (SEP 22 & 24): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- Phyllis Rooney, "Gendered Reason: Sex Metaphor and Conceptions of Reason"
- Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias" (sections 1 and 2)

WEEK 6 (SEP 29 & OCT 1): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- Earl Conee, "Universals"
- Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings"

WEEK 7 (OCT 6 & 8): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- Mari Mikkola, "Feminist Metaphysics and Philosophical Methodology"
- Theodore Sider, "Time"

WEEK 8 (OCT 13 & 15): MIDTERM EXAM PREP + MIDTERM EXAM

Readings:

- Tuesday, October 13, will be devoted to prepping for the Midterm Exam.
- The Midterm Exam will be held Thursday, October 15, during regular class time.

WEEK 9 (OCT 20 & 22): PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Readings:

- “Correspondence Between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth”
- Any Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”

WEEK 10 (OCT 27 & 29): PHILOSOPHY OF MIND & ETHICS

Readings:

- Erik Funkhouser, “Do the Self-Deceived Get What They Want?”
- Timothy Hsiao, “How to Think About the Gun Control Debate”

WEEK 11 (NOV 3 & 5): ETHICS

Readings:

- Kate Manne, “Why I Use Trigger Warnings”
- Anne Barnhill, “Just Pushy Enough”

WEEK 12 (NOV 10 & 12): ETHICS

Readings:

- Julie Kirsch, “Is Abortion a Question of Personal Morality?”
- Robin DiAngelo, “Racism and White Supremacy”

WEEK 13 (NOV 17 & 19): PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Readings:

- Nick Trakakis, “The Evidential Problem of Evil” (available online)
- Kathryn Pogin, “God is Not Male”

WEEK 14 (NOV 24 & 26): THANKSGIVING BREAK!

WEEK 15 (DEC 1 & 3): PHILOSOPHY OF DISABILITY

Readings:

- Your Term Paper is due Tuesday, December 1.
- Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, chapter 2 (pp.54-77)
- Abigail Gosselin, “Mental Illness Stigma and Epistemic Credibility”

WEEK 16 (DEC 8 & 10): PHILOSOPHY OF SEX & GENDER

Readings:

- John Corvino, “Homosexuality, Harm, and Moral Principles”
- Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze” (sections 1, 2, and 4)

WEEK 17 (DEC 19): FINALS WEEK

- The Final Exam will be held on Blackboard on Tuesday, December 15th, from 12:30-2:30pm.

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
Old Main 318E
479-575-8712
eminar@uark.edu