

## Philosophy 105: Philosophical Problems

This course serves as an introduction to some of the main issues in Western philosophy. Emphasis is placed on analytical thinking, speaking, and writing. Issues addressed include: personal identity, gender and race theory, natural kinds, the mind/body problem, external-world skepticism, determinism and free will, the meaning of ethical statements, and cultural relativism.

### My goals for the course

#### *Class discussion*

1. I want us to build the relationships required to explore challenging ideas together with genuine connection and good humor.
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3. I want everyone to talk a lot, and listen a lot. The standard deviation of class participation rates should be low.
4. I want our collective intelligence and diverse backgrounds to allow us to arrive at novel and plausible positions about fundamental issues in philosophy.
5. I want you to engage with perspectives beyond your own, including those beyond your own cultural and historical circumstances.

#### *Writing*

6. I want you to develop your skills at generating paper topics about philosophical topics that are interesting and suitable for the paper length.
7. I want you to be able to state and evaluate rigorous arguments in support of clear positions.
8. I want you to improve your skills at writing analytical essays, especially in managing secondary sources.
9. I want you to become a better editor of your own work.

### Required text:

*Echoes from the Cave*, ed. Lisa Gannett, Oxford University Press.

### Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Note that some of the reading for this class is difficult, and requires both close attention and occasional re-reading.

August 28 Introduction

*Personal Identity and the Afterlife*

August 30 PHIL 105 syllabus  
John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity," 13-18  
Oliver Sacks, "The Lost Mariner," 19-26

September 4 Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity," 27-35

September 6 **No class**

September 11 \*Plato, from *Phaedo*  
\*John Perry, from *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

*Natural Kinds and Identity*

September 13 **First 2-page paper due**  
\*Case Study: Advance Directives  
\*World Transhumanist Association, *The Transhumanist Declaration*  
John Locke, "Of Words," 105-110

September 18 Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," 111-116  
John Dupré, "Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa," 117-125

September 20 Simone de Beauvoir, from *The Second Sex*, 45-51  
\*Alice Dreger, "Intersex Rights"

September 25 Ian Hacking, "Madness: Biological or Constructed?," 126-136  
Thomas King, "You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind," 52-63

September 27 **Second 2-page paper due**  
\*Albert Mosley, "Are Racial Categories Racist?"

October 2 Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?," 137-145

October 4 **Midterm Exam**

**FALL BREAK**

*Mind and Body*

October 16 \*Descartes, *Meditation VI*  
J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes," 234-240

October 18 Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States," 241-247

\*Frank Jackson, "The Qualia Problem"

October 23 Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," 248-255  
\*Paul Churchland, "Behaviorism, Materialism, and Functionalism"

October 25 \*John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"  
\*Ted Chiang, "Exhalation"

### Skepticism

October 30 René Descartes, from *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 171-178  
\*Pollock, "A Brain in a Vat"

November 1 \*O. K. Bouwsma, "Descartes' Evil Genius"  
\*G. E. Moore, "Proof of an External World"

November 6 **Equity and Inclusion Day**

November 8 **5-page paper due**  
George Berkeley, from *Three Dialogues*, 179-187

November 13 David Hume, from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 188-196  
Anjan Chakravartty, "Realism and Anti-Realism; Metaphysics and Empiricism," 213-221

### Freedom of the Will

November 15 Baron d'Holbach, "Of the System of Man's Free Agency," 64-70  
\*Ted Chiang, "What's Expected of Us"  
\*Timothy O'Connor, "The Agent As Cause"

November 20 Moritz Schlick, "When is a Man Responsible?," 84-89  
Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 90-95

November 22 \*Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"

### **Thanksgiving Break**

December 4 Marcia Baron, "Crime, Genes, and Responsibility," 96-104

### The Foundations of Ethics

December 6 Plato, *Euthyphro*, 305-313  
A.J. Ayer, "Critique of Ethics," 353-359

December 11 **Last Day of Class**  
Melville J. Herskovits, "Cultural Relativism and Cultural Values," 368-375

Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation," 377-384

December 17 **7-page paper due**