

Philosophy 110: Introduction to Philosophy, Fall 2009
TTh 1:30-2:20, 1 HTBA; room WLH 208
Professor J. North (jill.north@yale.edu)
Teaching fellows Dawn Jacob (dawn.jacob@yale.edu) and Bryan McCarthy
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This class is an introduction to philosophical thought and reasoning. We will discuss several topics in philosophy, using both historical and contemporary readings.

Readings

The Elements of Philosophy, Tamar Szabó Gendler, Susanna Siegel, and Steven M. Cahn, eds., available at Labyrinth. Readings not in this book will be available on the classes server.

Requirements and grading

Reading for each class. The assigned reading won't be extensive, but the material is difficult. You will need to read the texts slowly and carefully, and more than once, in order to understand them at the level needed for the class. One of the goals of the class is to give you the tools to read such texts on your own. In order to help you with this, I will post reading questions for each assignment on the classes server. These questions are designed to help guide you through the texts. Some of these questions will also serve as the basis for paper assignments and for discussion in sections each week.

Three 5-8 page papers. Each paper counts for 30% of your final grade. If your papers show improvement during the semester, however, the later ones will be weighted more heavily. TAs are willing to look at first drafts and give you feedback, but drafts must be in no later than one week before the due date.

Attendance and participation in lectures and discussion sections count for 10% of your final grade. Participation can only help your grade, not hurt it; poor attendance may lower your grade. Attendance at lectures and sections is mandatory. Lectures will outline arguments in the readings, summarize key themes and ideas, and discuss objections. Sections allow you the opportunity to discuss these things in more depth. Note that if you miss a class, it is *your responsibility* to get the notes and any announcements from a classmate.

Warnings

Late papers will have their grades deducted one notch for each day late. There are no exceptions. Due dates are listed below. Plan ahead.

Plagiarism: don't do it, period. You will fail the assignment, and possibly the class. Better to take the late penalty than risk failing the class. I and the teaching fellows are happy to meet with you or discuss by email your papers in progress beforehand. There should be no need for cheating. That aside, one goal of this class is to learn how to think and reason. If you sign up for the class, you should be interested in that goal. So do your own reasoning.

Discussion sections

Dawn Jacob: Friday 10:30–11:20am and 11:35am–12:25pm

Bryan McCarthy: Tuesday 3:30–4:20pm and 4:30–5:20pm

Office hours

Dawn Jacob: Fridays 1:00–2:30pm, HGS McDougal Center

Bryan McCarthy: Thursdays 2:30–4:00pm

Prof. North: Tuesdays 3:30–4:30pm, 405a CT Hall

Schedule

This is a tentative schedule. Details are subject to change during the semester. Readings are listed next to the date they will be discussed.

Sept. 3: Introduction

Simon Blackburn, *What Is Philosophy?*, pp. 1–5

Simon Blackburn, *The Elements of Logic*, pp. 5–10

Traditional Arguments For and Against the Existence of God

Sept. 8: The ontological argument

Saint Anselm, *The Ontological Argument*, pp. 15–16

Gaunilo, *In Behalf of the Fool*, pp. 16–17

William L. Rowe, *Why the Ontological Argument Fails*, pp. 21–24

Sept. 10: The cosmological argument; the argument from design

Richard Taylor, *The Cosmological Argument*, pp. 25–31

William Paley, *The Argument from Design*, pp. 31–34

Sept. 15: Arguments against the existence of God

John Hick, *The Problem of Evil*, pp. 39–44
Nicholas Everitt, *Theism and Modern Science*, pp. 66–69

Knowledge and Reality

- Sept. 17: Defining “knowledge”
Plato, “What Is Knowledge?”, from *The Meno*, pp. 343–344
Edmund Gettier, *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?*, pp. 344–346
- Sept. 22: Skepticism about the external world
René Descartes, *Meditation 1*, pp. 351–354
- Sept. 24: Skepticism and foundationalism
René Descartes, *Meditation 2*, pp. 354–358
- Sept. 29: A response to Descartes’ skeptical challenge
Jonathan Vogel, *Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation*, pp. 373–379

Paper 1: Topics posted to the classes server on September 29. Optional first draft due October 6. Final paper due in your drop box on the classes server by midnight **Tuesday, October 13.**

- Oct. 1: Idealism
George Berkeley, selections from *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge*, pp. 384–392
- Oct. 6: Hypotheses about the nature of reality
David Chalmers, *The Matrix as Metaphysics*, pp. 405–419
- Oct. 8: Induction
David Hume, “Induction,” from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, pp. 422–428

Freedom and the Person

- Oct. 13: The problem of free will; compatibilism
A. J. Ayer, *Freedom and Necessity*, pp. 475–480
- Oct. 15: Incompatibilism: libertarianism
Roderick Chisholm, *Human Freedom and the Self*, pp. 480–488
- Oct. 20: Compatibilism again
Harry Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*, 488–497

- Oct. 22: Personal identity over time
John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity," from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, pp. 512–521
- Oct. 27: Psychological continuity and the importance of personal identity
Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity," from *Reasons and Persons*, pp. 532–548
- Oct. 29: Consciousness
Thomas Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?*, pp. 620–628

Paper 2: Topics posted October 29. Optional first draft due November 5.
Paper due in drop box on server by midnight **Thursday, November 12.**

- Nov. 3: The Turing test
A. M. Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, pp. 663–677
- Nov. 5: Reply to the Turing test
John Searle, *Can Computers Think?*, pp. 677–683

Moral Philosophy

- Nov. 10: The universality of morality
James Rachels, *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*, pp. 240–248
- Nov. 12: Utilitarianism
John Stuart Mill, selections from *Utilitarianism*, pp. 77–88
- Nov. 17: Deontology
Immanuel Kant, selections from *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 105–111
- Nov. 19: The value of morality
Susan Wolf, *Moral Saints*, pp. 220–232
- Dec. 1: Moral duties to the poor
Peter Singer, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 139–153
- Dec. 3: Abortion
Judith Jarvis Thomson, *A Defense of Abortion*, classes server

Paper 3 Topics posted December 3. Optional draft due December 10. Paper due in drop box on server by midnight **Thursday, December 17.**