

INTRO PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy 104, Fall 2017
M/Th 11:30–12:50
Rutgers Academic Building 4225
office hours M 1:00–2:00 & by appt

Philosophy is often viewed as the dreamy contemplation of “the big questions”. Philosophers do indeed ask those big questions: Do we really know anything? Is there a god? Do we have free will? How should a moral person act? But they do not engage in whimsical speculation about vaguely defined issues. They use rigorous and disciplined methods of thinking, in the hopes of bringing these deep questions under intellectual control. This course will be an in-depth look at some of these questions (rather than a comprehensive historical survey). You will learn what philosophy is all about and how to do it yourself.

Requirements

One 3–5 page paper (10%), one 5–7 page paper (20%), two exams (35% each). Papers must be [emailed to me](#) by the start of class on the due date. Late papers lose one letter grade per day. Extensions only in documented extreme circumstances (e.g., not for conflicts with assignments in other classes—plan ahead!). Handouts and announcements will be posted on the course website.

Website

<http://tedsider.org/teaching/intro/intro.html>

Paper topics, handouts, study guides, cancelled classes and other announcements will be posted here.

Textbook

Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, *Reason and Responsibility* (16th ed)

Important dates

1/26 no class
2/16 paper 1 due (1:10pm)
3/28 exam 1
4/13 no class
4/27 paper 2 due (1:10pm)
5/5 exam 2 (8:00am)

Tentative schedule (Readings from *R&R* unless otherwise noted; “web” means on the course readings webpage)

Note: there will be no class on 1/26 and 4/13

Existence of God

1/17 What is philosophy? Preliminaries for discussing God’s existence
1/19 Cosmological arguments. Aquinas, “The Five Ways”; Clark, “A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument”, Rowe, “The Cosmological Argument”
1/24 Cosmological arguments continued; argument from design. Paley, “The Argument from Design”
1/26 **no class**
1/31 Problem of evil. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”
2/2 Problem of evil continued. Swinburne, “Why God Allows Evil” (web)
2/7 Pascal’s wager. Pascal, “The Wager”
2/9 [*missed a day*]
2/14 catch-up

Free will and determinism

2/16 The problem of free will. **Paper 1 due**
2/21 Hard determinism. Holbach, “We Are Never Free” (web)

- 2/23 Libertarianism. Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”
- 2/28 Soft determinism
- 3/2 Soft determinism continued. Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”
- 3/7 catch-up

Epistemology

- 3/9 The challenge of skepticism. Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy”, Meditations I and II (skim III–VI).
- 3/21 Idealism. Berkeley, “Of the Principles of Human Knowledge”
- 3/23 The problem of induction. Hume, “An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding”, section IV (parts I and II)
- 3/28 **Exam 1**
- 3/30 catch-up

Ethics

- 4/4 Shafer-Landau, “Ethical Subjectivism”
- 4/6 continued
- 4/11 Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
- 4/13 **no class**
- 4/18 Wolf, “Moral Saints” (web)
- 4/20 Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (web)
- 4/25 Marquis, “An Argument that Abortion is Wrong”
- 4/27 catch-up. **Paper 2 due**