

Critical Thinking and Writing (PHIL 3480, sec. 001)
Fall 2011

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Office Hours: MWF 10-11
Fr after 12 by appointment

Course Content

This class will be an extended exercise in slow reading and frequent writing. We will be looking at a small number of classic papers in recent philosophy, moving paragraph by paragraph so that we can come to understand, in detail, what the authors are doing and how they are doing it. The aim will not be to master any one area of philosophy, but to learn better how to *do* philosophy. Students will be required to participate constantly, and to write a short paper each week.

Course Material

All the class readings will be made available either as photocopies or as electronic documents. The latter will be emailed to your CU address, and posted on my web page. It is your responsibility to print out hard copies of all electronic readings, and bring the reading to class. Failure to do so will count against your attendance and participation grade (see below).

You will also want to take advantage of other material on my web page, especially the tips for writing papers: <http://spot.colorado.edu/~pasnau>

Course Requirements

1. Weekly papers, worth 50% of your final grade.
2. Attendance and participation, worth 50% of your final grade.

Notes

- a. Papers will be due every Monday, except holidays. Unless otherwise noted, each paper will be worth 10 points. Late papers will lose a point for each class day they are late. But, papers may always be submitted for 5 points worth of credit, up until the end of the semester.
- b. Students that need to adjust this schedule for religious reasons should contact me in advance.
- c. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services (DS) early in the semester so that your needs may be addressed. DS determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671; Willard 322; www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices)
- d. Any work that you submit for this class is governed by the CU Honor Code, according to which you must pledge that "I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this work." To abide by that pledge, you must identify any help you receive on papers or tests from published work, the internet, other students, other students' papers, or papers of your own from other classes. To make use of any such help without acknowledgment is plagiarism, for which you will receive an F and be reported to the college. For information on the CU Honor Code, go to <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

Weekly Schedule

We will move, as slowly as we need to, through the following works:

1. Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"
2. Harry Frankfurt, "On Bullshit"
3. Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"
4. Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
5. Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect"
6. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"
7. Peter Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions"
8. Peter van Inwagen, "It is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence"
9. Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements"
10. Robert Pasnau, work in progress
11. Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*