

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY 1000, SPRING 2017

## SECTION 001

MWF, 10:00, VAC 1B90

## INSTRUCTOR

Jonathan Spelman

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<https://www.chalkup.co/course/585dcc64281f930800a658cb/trending>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to some of the central questions in philosophy and identifies some potential answers to them. For example, we consider epistemological questions such as whether we can trust our senses and, more generally, whether we can know anything. We consider metaphysical questions such as whether God exists and whether we could survive the death of our bodies. Finally, we consider normative questions such as whether we have a moral obligation to donate money to famine relief and whether it is morally wrong to buy and eat factory-farmed meat, pollute the environment, and/or play violent video games. Along the way, this course helps students develop the philosophical skills they need to answer these questions. In particular, it helps students to construct and evaluate arguments, devise thought experiments and counterexamples, and develop intellectual courage, empathy, and humility.

## OFFICE HOURS

I will hold office hours on Mondays from 11:00a-12:45p and Wednesdays from 2:00p-3:45p in Helms 15. I am also available by appointment.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Course Pack
- John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*. Hackett, 1978.
- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditation on First Philosophy*, translated by Donald A. Cress, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Hackett, 1999.

## TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Studies show that students who write their notes retain more information than those who type their notes (see, for example, <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>). In light of that, I ask that you not use your laptops during class. Of course, if you have a compelling reason for using your laptop during class, please let me know. I am willing to make exceptions to this rule in certain cases.

## GRADES

Grades will be assigned in accordance with the university's uniform grading policy. "A" grades are exceptional and are reserved for those students who demonstrate both a comprehensive understanding of the material and competence with all the philosophical skills we work on over the course of the semester. "B-/C+" grades are average.

## **GRADED ELEMENTS**

### *CLASS PREPARATION AND ATTENDANCE*

You are expected to prepare for each class period by reading and flagging the assigned text and reflecting on its content. You are also expected to attend class regularly. You may miss up to five classes without penalty, but after your fifth absence, each additional absence will result in a 2.5% reduction in your final grade.

### *PARTICIPATION*

You are expected to be an informed, active participant in all small group activities (e.g., homework and peer review activities), small group discussions, and large group discussions. This is good for you, your classmates, and me. We will all benefit from your input. You are also expected to complete a number of miscellaneous assignments over the course of the semester. If you are unsatisfied with your grade on any one of them, you may redo it (shortly thereafter) to improve your grade. You may, at some point, be asked to prepare some material for presentation at a future time, in which case you are expected to do that. Finally, you are expected to prepare for and participate in three debates. Your class participation grade will account for 20% of your final grade.

### *HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS*

You will have approximately six homework assignments over the course of the semester. Although you should complete each homework assignment on your own, before class, you will be able to rework a number of them (but not all of them) in class with a small groups of your peers. Those you are able to rework will account for (approximately) 2.5% of your grade. Those you are *not* able to rework will account for (approximately) 5% of your grade. Combined, your homework assignments will account for 20% of your final grade.

### *JOURNAL ENTRIES*

Most weeks, you will be expected to either compose a journal entry on that week's prompt or participate in an online discussion of that prompt. If you choose to compose a journal entry on the prompt, it should be at least 150 words and should be posted online. In it, you should provide your position on the questions at issue, an argument for your position, an objection to your argument, and a response to that objection. If you choose to participate in an online discussion of the prompt, you are expected to post an original insight that advances the relevant debate. Your post need not be particularly long. In fact, I would prefer multiple short posts to a single, long post. Your journal assignments will typically be due on Fridays. Your journal grade will account for 20% of your final grade.

### *PAPERS*

During the semester, you will write two 3-4 page (900-1200 word) papers. We will talk more about the paper requirements on Friday, March 10. A hard copy of your first paper will be due in class on Friday, March 24. An electronic copy of your second paper will be due by 11:59 pm on the day of your final exam. Each paper will account for 20% of your final grade.

<u>GRADED ELEMENT</u>	<u>%</u>
Participation	20
Homework Assignments	20
Journal Entries	20
<u>Papers</u>	<u>40</u>
Total	100

## ASSIGNED READINGS

### *Week 1 – Introduction to Philosophy*

- 1/18  [Sean Blanda, “The Other Side Is Not Dumb”](#)
- 1/20  *CP*: How to Read Philosophy, pp. 19-26
- Redo summary of excerpt from Mill’s *On Liberty***

### *Week 2 – Evaluating and (Re)Constructing Arguments*

- 1/23  *CP*: Lewis Vaughn and Louis Pojman, “Excursus: A Little Bit of Logic,” pp. 47-51
- [Wireless Philosophy, What Makes an Argument Valid?](#)
- [Wireless Philosophy, What Makes an Argument Sound?](#)
- CP*: Evaluating Arguments, pp. 1-5
- 1/25  **Homework #1**
- 1/27  *CP*: (Re)Constructing Arguments, pp. 7-9
- [Wireless Philosophy, What Is an Implicit Premise?](#)

### *Week 3 – Thought Experiments, Counterexamples, and Famine Relief*

- 1/30  **Homework #2**
- 2/01  *CP*: Thought Experiments, pp. 11-12
- CP*: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” pp. 53-57
- 2/03  *CP*: Counterexamples, pp. 13-14
- CP*: Travis Timmerman, “A Reply to Singer,” pp. 59-60

### *Week 4 – Discourse on Method*

- 2/06  **Précis and Debate**: Are we morally obligated to relieve famine?
- 2/08  René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part I
- 2/10  René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part II

### *Week 5 – The Meditations*

- 2/13  René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1<sup>st</sup> Meditation
- Homework #3**
- 2/15  René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meditation
- 2/17  René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Meditation

### *Week 6 – The Cosmological Argument for God’s Existence*

- 2/20  *CP*: St. Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways,” pp. 164-166
- Homework #4**
- 2/22  *CP*: William Rowe, “An Examination of the Cosmological Argument,” pp. 167-176
- 2/24  **Précis and Debate**: Does the cosmological argument prove God’s existence?

### *Week 7 – The Problem of Evil*

- 2/27  René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4<sup>th</sup> Meditation
- 3/01\*  *CP*: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “Some Reasons to Believe that There Is No God,” pp. 75-84
- 3/03\*  *CP*: John Hick, “There Is a Reason Why God Allows Evil,” pp. 85-90
- In-Class Group Activity**

### *Week 8 – The Meditations*

- 3/06  **Précis and Debate**: Does the existence of evil disprove God’s existence?
- 3/08  René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 6<sup>th</sup> Meditation
- 3/10  *CP*: Evaluated Elements, Rubric, and Example, pp. 31-39

*Week 9 – Writing Workshop*

3/13  **Paper #1 Intro Paragraph**

3/15

3/17  René Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, “Letters,” pp. 91-95

**Paper #1 Intro Paragraph Approval**

*Week 10 – Writing Workshop*

3/20  **Paper #1 Draft Due**

3/22  **Peer Review Feedback Due**

3/24  **Paper #1 Due**

*Week 11 – Spring Break*

3/27

3/29

3/31



*Week 12 – Personal Identity*

4/03  CP: John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, “First Night”

4/05  CP: John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, “Second Night”

4/07  CP: John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, “Third Night”

*Week 13 – Personal Identity*

4/10  **Homework #5**

4/12\*  *Who is Julia?* or *Being John Malkovich*

4/14\*  *Who is Julia?* or *Being John Malkovich*

*Week 14 – Animal Ethics*

4/17  **Précis and Debate:** What makes you *you*? Could you survive the death of your body?

4/19  CP: Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People,” pp. 97-100

4/21  **Homework #6**

*Week 15 – Video Games*

4/24  **Précis and Debate:** Is it wrong to buy and eat factory-farmed meat?

4/26  CP: Marcus Schulzke, “Defending the Morality of Violent Video Games,” pp. 101-106

4/28  CP: Morgan Luck, “The Gamer’s Dilemma,” pp. 107-112

*Week 16 – Environmental Ethics*

5/01  **Précis and Debate:** Is it wrong to murder someone in a video game?

5/03  CP: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It’s Not *My* Fault,” pp. 113-118

5/05  CP: Marion Hourdequin, “Climate, Collective Action, and Individual Ethical Obligations,” pp. 119-124

**Final Exam**

5/08 01:30p  **Précis and Debate:** Is it wrong to joyride?

11:59p  **Paper #2 Due**

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### *ACADEMIC HONESTY*

<http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council at 303-735-2273 or [honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu) and those students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member involved and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at the website above.

### *CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR POLICY*

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>

[http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at the websites above.

### *DISABILITY AND MEDICAL CONDITION POLICY*

<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. (For exam accommodations, provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam.) Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or have other questions, see the website above.

### *DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT POLICY*

<http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/>

The University of Colorado Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes by any employee or student or related retaliation against any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, or political philosophy. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon the above-mentioned Protected Classes should contact either the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu) or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550 or [student.conduct@colorado.edu](mailto:student.conduct@colorado.edu). Information about the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at the website above.

### *RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY*

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams>

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please let me know prior to the third week of classes if one of your religious obligations prohibits you from either attending class on a particular day or completing a particular assignment. See full details at the website above.