

Introduction to Philosophy
Section 5 (MWF)

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Course summary

In this course, we will consider seven questions: (1) What do we know? (2) What is real? (3) What do we value? (4) Is science objective? (5) What is God? (6) Why should we live with our enemies? (7) What is race? Along the way, we will examine different modes of philosophical inquiry and how these intersect with political, social, religious, and scientific domains.

Course texts

Five books are required for this course:

- Chalmers, D. 2022. *Reality+* (Norton) = Chalmers
- Delgado, R. and Stefanic, J. 2017: *Critical Race Theory*, 3rd ed. (NYU) = Delgado & Stefanic
- Strevens, M. 2020. *The Knowledge Machine* (Liveright) = Strevens
- Stump, E. 2016. *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Marquette) = Stump
- Talisse, R. 2021. *Sustaining Democracy* (Oxford) = Talisse

Other readings will be made available on the Canvas page for the course.

Grading

Participation (0%): There is no formal attendance policy. More than 4 unexcused absences could result in an F, as per the College's policy.

Short questions (15%; *Due before class*): 30 minutes before the start of class, please submit a question that came to mind during the reading (if there are multiple readings, please summarize just *one* of the readings). These can be submitted on Canvas. There are 40 class periods with reading assignments, and ***you need to submit only 30 questions***.

Logic exercises (10%; *Due periodically—see syllabus*): In the first half of the semester, there will be short exercises about basic aspects of argumentation theory. These will be due prior to the start of class on Canvas.

Exam 1 (15%; *February 27*): There will be a short exam on logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory. The format of the exam will consist of short answer questions, short essays, and one “synthetic” essay.

Exam 2 (25%; *April 19*): There will be a short exam on scientific objectivity, classical theism, and the moral demands of democracy. The format will be the same as Exam 1.

Final exam (35%; *Exam date TBD*): There will be one cumulative final at the end of the term.

Academic Integrity

All students pledge to abide by the guidelines on academic integrity outlined in the *Undergraduate Catalogue* (in the aptly titled section “Academic Integrity”).

Boilerplate

Student Success Center: The Student Success Center (Phillips Memorial Library, Room 250) offers a wide variety of support services for all students, including group and individual tutoring, academic skills mentoring, disability support, and writing assistance. *Note:* Students who may need academic accommodation based on a documented disability should make the necessary arrangements as soon as possible. All accommodations must be arranged through the Student Success Center.

Mental Health and Well-Being: As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, depression, difficulty concentration, or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may affect your ability to attend class, concentrate, complete work, take an exam, or participate in daily activities. If mental health and adjustment concerns are causing distress, please speak to me and/or reach out for personal support. Remember that asking for help is a sign of strength and courage. Additional resources can be found at the Personal Counseling Center, Dean Of Students, CARE team, Chaplain’s Office, Title IX Office, PC/Day One Advocate, and the Student Health Center.

Diversity & Inclusion: It is my intent that students from all backgrounds be well-served by this course, that their learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity they bring into the classroom be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I will make every effort to present material and activities that are respectful of your various identities, including (but not limited to) those tied to ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, and culture. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, either by myself or other students, is particularly troubling or upsetting. While our intention may not be to cause distress or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course should not be ignored and deserves proper attention. It is critical that we work together to create a safe and bias-free learning environment in which all students can thrive and succeed. I take this mission very seriously and your suggestions on how to best accomplish it are always encouraged and appreciated.

Schedule

(*This schedule is subject to change; all modifications will be announced in class)

1/18 Introduction and Syllabus
No reading

The basics of philosophy

1/20 **What is philosophy? How is philosophy related to other disciplines?**

o Chalmers, *Introduction* (pp. xi-xxii)

1/23 **How is philosophical inquiry organized?**

o Chalmers, ch. 1 (pp. 3-19)

**Logic Exercise #1 due*

1/25 **How does philosophy work?**

o Chalmers, ch. 2 (pp. 20-40)

**Logic Exercise #2 due*

Epistemology

1/27 **No class**

**Logic Exercise #3 due*

1/30 **What is knowledge?**

o Chalmers, ch. 3 (pp. 43-44)

o Greco, *Putting Skeptics in their Place* (pp. 15-24; on Canvas)

**Logic Exercise #4 due*

2/1 **Do we know anything?**

o Chalmers, ch. 3 (pp. 44 – 49, 55 – 58)

**Logic exercise #5 due*

2/3 **Is skepticism even meaningful?**

o Chalmers, ch. 4 (pp. 61 – 64, 71 – 74, 76 – 79)

2/6 **Is skepticism obviously false?**

o Chalmers, ch. 4 (pp. 79 – 80)

o Moore, “Proof of an external world” (on Canvas)

**Logic Exercise #6 due*

Metaphysics

2/8 **What is real?**

o Chalmers, ch. 6 (pp. 105 – 119)

2/10 **What is everything made of?**

o Chalmers, ch. 6 (pp. 145 – 166)

2/13 **What is consciousness?**

o Chalmers, ch. 15 (pp. 274 – 287)

**Logic exercise #7 due*

- 2/15 **Science and structure**
o Chalmers, ch. 20 (pp. 399 – 422)

Value Theory

- 2/17 **Does reality matter?**
o Chalmers, ch. 17 (pp. 311 – 330)
- *2/21 **Should you kill or let die?**
o Chalmers, ch. 18 (pp. 331 – 339)

Note: Due to honoring our presidents, we will have class on Tuesday

- 2/22 **Does the afterlife matter?**
o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp. 15 – 49 (on Canvas)
- 2/24 **Why do we value the future?**
o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp. 51 – 81 (on Canvas)

Philosophy of Science

- 2/27 **EXAM 1 – In class**
- 3/1 **Why does science need philosophy?**
o Strevens, pp. 1 – 9
- 3/3 **What makes science scientific?**
o Strevens, pp. 13 – 22
o “Hint of crack in standard model vanishes in LHC data” (*Nature*, 12/22)

3/6 *Spring break*

3/8 *Spring break*

3/10 *Spring break*

- 3/13 **Revolutionary science and normal science**
o Strevens, pp. 22 – 40
o Kuhn, “Postscript” in *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (on Canvas)
o “Disruptive science has declined and no one knows why” (*Nature*, 1/23)
- 3/15 **Subjectivity and objectivity in science**
o Strevens, pp. 41 – 65

3/17 *No class*

3/20 **Science and the scope of evidence**
Strevens, pp. 89 – 109

3/22 *No class*

Philosophy of Religion

3/24 **The basics of classical theism**
o Stump, pp. 11 – 40

3/27 **The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit**
o Stump, pp. 40 – 56

3/29 **Classical theism and a personal God**
o Stump, pp. 56 – 97

3/31 **Open topic day**
o Stump, “The problem of evil and the history of peoples” [Evil]
o Murray, “Coercion and the hiddenness of God” [Hiddenness]
o Howard-Snyder, “The Skeptical Christian” [Faith]

Political Philosophy

4/3 **Why is democracy in crisis?**
o Talisse, pp. 1 – 19

4/5 **What do we owe our fellow citizens?**
o Talisse, pp. 20 – 41

4/7 *Good Friday; no class*

4/10 *Easter break; no class*

4/12 **Why live with contra-partisans?**
o Talisse, pp. 42 – 67

4/14 **Why should we cooperate with our enemies?**
o Talisse, pp. 68 – 104

4/17 **How can we get along?**
o Talisse, pp. 105 – 141

4/19 **Are we even doing anything?**
o Talisse, pp. 142 – 151

- o Voelkel et al., “Interventions reducing affective polarization do not necessarily improve anti-democratic attitudes” (on Canvas)

4/21 **No class**

Race and Critical Race Theory

4/24 **EXAM 2 – In class**

4/26 **What is race?**

- o Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, pp. 1 – 26 (on Canvas)

4/28 **What is critical race theory?**

- o Delgado and Stefaniec, pp., 1 – 13, 19 – 24, 31 – 32

5/1 **Race and identity**

- o Delgado and Stefaniec, pp. 58 – 73
- o Appiah, “But would that still be me?” (on Canvas)

5/3 **Colorblindness**

- o Delgado and Stefaniec, pp. 26 – 31, 113 – 124, 130 – 135
- o Bessone, “Racism and Epistemologies of Ignorance: Framing the French Case” (on Canvas)

5/5 **Speaking for others**

- o Alcoff, “The problem of speaking for others” (on Canvas)