

Introduction to Philosophy

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Course summary

In this course, we will consider 6 questions: (1) Is the mind a computer? (2) Is consciousness part of the physical world? (3) Does it matter if the world keeps existing after you die? (4) Should you give away everything you can to help those in need? (5) Why does a good God let so many bad things happen? (6) How does philosophy differ across cultures? Along the way, we will consider how philosophy intersects with the social, moral, and religious domains

Course texts

Three books are required for this course:

- Crane, T. 2016. *The Mechanical Mind*, 3rd ed. (Routledge)
- Cullity, G. 2004. *The Moral Demands of Affluence* (Oxford)
- Maffie, J. 2015. *Aztec Philosophy* (Colorado)
- Scheffler, S. 2016. *Death and the Afterlife* (Oxford)
- Van Inwagen, P. 2006. *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford)

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.

Book summaries (25%; *Due periodically*): At the end of each unit, you will submit a short (500 – 750 word) summary of the main books we are reading. The summary should answer the following questions: (i) what is the book trying to argue? (ii) what are the best points the book makes in support of this argument? (iii) what is one major objection that you can think of to the argument? (iv) what is one thing you learned or enjoyed about reading the book?

Exam 1 (10%; *February 12*): There will be a short exam on questions in the philosophy of mind. The format of the exam will consist of short answer questions and short essays.

Exam 2 (10%; *February 28*): There will be a short exam on death and value. The format will be the same as Exam 1.

Exam 3 (10%; *March 22*): There will be a short exam on the ethics of charity. The format is the same as Exams 1 & 2.

Exam 4 (10%; *April 17*): There will be a short exam on theodicy and evil. The format is the same as Exams 1 – 3.

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”). If you violate the academic integrity policy, it may result in a 0 for the relevant assignment, an F for the course, or additional penalties as determined by the College.

Schedule

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

1/17 Introduction and Syllabus
No reading

The basics of philosophy

1/19 **What is philosophy? How is philosophy related to other disciplines?**
No reading

1/22 **Where do philosophical problems come from?**
No reading

1/24 **What does a philosophical answer look like?**
o Taurek, “Should the numbers count?” [On Canvas]

Is the mind a computer?

1/26 **Bringing the mind down to Earth**
o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 1

1/29 **Who is the artist of the mind?**
o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 2

1/31 **How do we think about anything?**
o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 3

2/2 ***No class – Sam at Brown***

2/5 **Watch what you say!**
o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 5

2/7 **The computational mind**

- o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 6
- 2/9 **Can a computer have a mind?**
 - o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 7
- 2/12 **The causal theory of representation**
 - o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 9
- 2/14 **Where is consciousness?**
 - o Crane, *Mechanical Mind*, ch. 13
 - *NO SUMMARY DUE – I’ll provide an example
- 2/16 **EXAM 1 – in class**

Unit 2: Value Theory

- *2/20 **Does the afterlife matter?**
 - o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp. 15 – 49 (on Canvas)

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

- 2/21 **Why do we value the future?**
 - o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp. 51 – 81 (on Canvas)
- 2/23 **Immortality and boredom?**
 - o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp.
- 2/26 **What is Doomsday?**
 - o Wolf, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp.
- 2/28 **What does the afterlife mean?**
 - o Frankfurt, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp.
- 3/1 **The value of the impersonal future**
 - o Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*, pp.
 - *SUMMARY 1 DUE!

- 3/4 **EXAM 2 – In class**

Unit 3: The obligation to help

- 3/6 **Famine and affluence**
 - o Cullity, *Moral demands of affluence*, ch. 1
- 3/8 *Early spring break!*

- 3/11 *Spring break*
- 3/13 *Spring break*
- 3/15 *Spring break*
- 3/18 **Good will toward all**
 o Cullity, *Moral demands of affluence*, ch. 2
- 3/20 **Give it away—all of it!**
 o Cullity, *Moral demands of affluence*, ch. 5
- 3/22 **But seriously...everything?!**
 o Cullity, *Moral demands of affluence*, ch. 8
- 3/25 **OK—maybe not everything**
 o Cullity, *Moral demands of affluence*, chs. 9 – 10
 *SUMMARY 2 DUE!
- 3/27 **EXAM 3 – In class**
- 3/29 *Easter break*
- 4/1 *Easter break*
- 4/3 *Sam in Brazil*
- 4/5 *Sam in Brazil*

Unit 4: The problem of evil

- 4/8 **Can a good God allow this much evil?**
 o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 1
- 4/10 **Who is God?**
 o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 2
- 4/12 **What does a response to the problem look like?**
 o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 3
- 4/15 **The BIG problem of evil**
 o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 4
- 4/17 **Evil and freedom**
 o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 5

4/19 **A littler problem of evil?**
o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 6

4/22 **Can't God force us to believe?**
o Van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil*, ch. 8
*SUMMARY 3 DUE!

4/24 **EXAM 4 – In class**

Unit 5: Paradoxes of rationality

4/26 **Newcomb's Problem**
o Lewis, "Why ain' cha rich?"

4/29 **The St. Petersburg two-envelope paradox**
o Chalmers, "The St. Petersburg Two-Envelope Paradox"

5/1 **The Surprise Exam Paradox**
o Kripke, "On two paradoxes of knowledge"

5/3 **The sleeping beauty paradox**
o Elga, "Self-locating belief and the sleeping beauty problem"

Final exam (TBD)