

PHI 1000 – Introduction to Philosophy

Spring 2020, AC02 LR 105, Monday and Wednesday 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Professor: Danny Weltman | danny.weltman@ashoka.edu.in | **Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10-12 in AC02 320

TF: Abbas Bagwala **TA:** Medha Kumar | medha.kumar_ug20@ashoka.edu.in

About This Course: Topic and Goals

In this course, you will be introduced to academic philosophy through an investigation of a few of the key issues that philosophers have investigated over the years.

Below are the **goals** for this course. For more detail see the course goals and learning outcomes handout.

- Learn a bit about what philosophy, as a field of academia, has studied
- Form some initial thoughts about some of the key questions and topics in philosophy
- Investigate the philosophy of personal identity in some depth
- Get practice with reading, writing, talking about, and thinking about philosophy in an academic setting

Course Content

We will begin with some short articles on topics like moral relativism and permission to cheat. The rest of the topics we study will be chosen by your votes. All readings are available on the course web site at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1795671>. Do the assigned reading for each class before coming to class that day. **Please bring the readings to class each day**, either printed out or in *easily accessible* electronic form.

Assignments and Grading

There are four kinds of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes**, **four sentence papers**, **500 word papers**, and **paper outlines**. Late reading quizzes will not be accepted. Other late assignments will lose points for each day (or portion thereof) that they are late.

Reading Quizzes (10% of your grade) are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. Quizzes are due 11:59 PM the night before we discuss the relevant reading in class. There is 1 quiz per class session, for a total of 26 quizzes. The 6 lowest scoring quizzes will be ignored.

Four Sentence Papers (15% of your grade) are the first way you will practice writing philosophy. They will introduce you to summaries and arguments. There are 4 due. The lowest scoring paper will be ignored.

500 Word Papers (45% of your grade) are your opportunity to get more practice writing concisely about philosophy. They should summarize a point from one of the readings, and then offer a **question**, an **extension of the idea or argument**, or a **critique of the idea or argument**. There are 4 due. The lowest scoring assignment will be ignored.

Peer-Graded Paper Outlines and Reflections (15% of your grade) are outlines of papers which will help you get used to reconstructing the structure of an author's argument, plus feedback which you write on your classmate's outlines, plus reflection on the feedback you gave and received.

Class and Section Participation (15% of your grade) is required. This includes attendance, listening respectfully to me, to your TF, and to your fellow students, and offering thoughtful questions and contributions to the discussion. Using mobile phones or computers for non-academic purposes, browsing the Internet, coming

in late, not showing up, or otherwise ignoring people is not respectful and will reduce your participation grade. You have 3 excused absences from discussion section. After those, any absences will reduce your participation score by 10% each. You have six excused absences from class. After those, any absences will reduce your participation grade by 5% each.

Grade Breakdown:

10% - Reading Quizzes (26, lowest 6 ignored)

15% - Four Sentence Papers (4, lowest 1 ignored)

45% - 500 Word Papers (4, lowest 1 ignored)

15% - Peer-Graded Paper Outlines and Reflections (3)

15% - Class and Section Participation

Class Grade Rubric:

100-97% = A+

<97-94% = A

<94-90% = A-

<90-87% = B+

<87-84% = B

<84-80% = B-

<80-77% = C+

<77-74% = C

<74-70% = C-

<70-67% = D+

<67-64% = D

<64-60% = D-

<60-0% = F

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, contact me ahead of time.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Any time you use **words, phrases, ideas, or anything else** in your writing that you did not think up on your own, you must **cite** your source the best of your ability. Words and phrases from others must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that you did not write them yourself. Failure to cite a source is **plagiarism** and it's not okay. Plagiarism may result in a zero on the assignment or in other point reductions. You should not need to use (or cite) outside sources for this class, but if you do use them, you must cite them. It is perfectly okay to use points made by your classmates in class or discussion section, *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite my lectures for your writing assignments in this class.

Office Hours, Email Communication, and Due Date Extensions

If you have questions or comments about the course it is best to come in and talk during office hours (Tuesdays 10 AM to noon in my office, AC02 320). You do not need an appointment to visit during office hours. If you cannot attend office hours you can email me to set up another time to meet, or just drop by to see if I am in my office. If you contact me via email, please include "PHI 1000" in the subject line so that I know you are emailing about this course. I will not offer extensions on assignment due dates. All of the assignment due dates are available in advance, so if you anticipate not having enough time to do the assignment right before it is due, you should do the assignment earlier.

Regrades

If you receive a grade which you think is not accurate, first schedule a meeting with the TF to discuss the assignment. If after the meeting you still believe the grade to be inaccurate, email me the assignment along with a one paragraph explanation of why you think the grade is inaccurate. I will regrade the assignment. A regrade is no guarantee of a higher grade: the new grade may be the same or lower than the original grade.

Resources

My website has resources on reading, writing, and researching at <http://danielweltman.com/resources.html>. These resources include a glossary for unfamiliar words or phrases. I encourage you to examine these resources.

Colloquia

Periodically the Philosophy department hosts colloquium talks by visiting philosophers (sometimes in conjunction with the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics program). In a colloquium talk, a philosopher presents some of their research and then the audience asks questions. Going to colloquium talks is a great way to introduce yourself to all sorts of topics in philosophy. You will receive announcements about upcoming colloquia in your email, and I encourage you to come to some of the talks this semester, and for the rest of your time here at Ashoka.

Schedule of Readings

Initial Topics

20 January: Carroll, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles"

22 January: Sorensen, "Permission to Cheat"

27 January: Nagel, "Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness"

29 January: Midgley, "On Trying Out One's New Sword"

3 February: Intemann, "Science and Values: Are Value Judgments Always Irrelevant to the Justification of Scientific Claims?"

5 February: Churchland, "The Hornswaggle Problem"

10 February: Driver, "Caesar's Wife: On the Moral Significance of Appearing Good"

12 February: Lenard, "Democratic Citizenship and Denationalization"

Personal Identity

17 February: Williams, "The Self and the Future"

19 February: Paper Outline Assignment: Williams

24 February: Parfit, "Personal Identity"

26 February: Paper Outline Assignment: Parfit

2 March: Schechtman, "The Narrative Self"

4 March: Swinburne, "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory"

Existentialism

16 March: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"

18 March: Beauvoir, "What is Existentialism?" and "Introduction to an Ethics of Ambiguity"

AI Consciousness

23 March: Searle, "Minds, Brains and Programs"

25 March: Paper Outline Assignment: Searle

30 March: Boden, "Escaping from the Chinese Room"

1 April: Churchland and Churchland, "Could a Machine Think?"

Free Will

6 April: Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

8 April: Ginet, "In Defense of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities"

13 April: Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person";

15 April: Ekstrom, "Toward a plausible event-causal indeterminist account of free will"

20 April: Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"

22 April: Pereboom, "Living Without Free Will: The Case for Hard Incompatibilism"