

PHIL 3695 – Personal Identity and Ethics

Monsoon 2021, Monday and Wednesday 10:10 AM to 11:40 AM | Office hours via appointment

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About This Course: Topic and Goals

This is a course about personal identity – what makes someone the person that they are – and some ethical issues related to personal identity.

Below are the **goals** for this course:

- Learn about the strengths and weaknesses of the key theories of personal identity and about intersections between personal identity and ethics
- Improve your writing skills with a focus on concise summary and argumentation
- If desired, develop and hone your capacity to explain complex philosophical ideas in a variety of ways

Course Content

Due to the difficulties of online instruction, class attendance is not mandatory, but you are expected to attend class if you are able to, because in-class discussion is extremely valuable. We meet via Zoom. All course material is available on the course website at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/3073569>.

Assignments and Grading

There are 5 kinds of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes**, **Perusall annotations**, **500 word papers** and/or **idea illustrations**, and **revisions**. Late stuff will lose 10% of the grade for each day they it's turned in late, up to a maximum of 50% off. The late penalty is calculated per hour (0.42% lost per hour). Your grade also depends in part on **discussion participation**.

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. There is one quiz per reading. The lowest 5 reading quiz scores will be dropped. You will earn maximum credit (10% of your grade) if your average reading quiz score (after the lowest 5 have been dropped) is 80% or higher. Otherwise you will earn whatever your average quiz score is.

Perusall Annotation Assignments (20% of your grade) allow you to collaboratively read the readings by using the Perusall website. Canvas has a document detailing examples of annotations you can make on Perusall and explaining the grading system. The lowest 5 Perusall annotation assignment scores will be dropped. You will earn maximum credit (10% of your grade) if your average reading Perusall score (after the lowest 5 have been dropped) is 80% or higher. Otherwise you will earn whatever your average Perusall score is.

500 Word Papers and/or **Idea Illustrations** (40% of your grade) are two different things. 500 word papers short writing assignments designed to give you practice writing concisely about philosophy and to give you more detailed feedback about how well you are understanding the material. Idea illustrations are things that make some idea clear to someone who is unfamiliar with it. There are 10 due and the lowest 4 will be dropped.

Revisions (15% of your grade) are revised resubmissions of 500 word papers or idea illustrations. Using my feedback and your own thoughts about how the assignment could be improved, you rewrite one of your papers or redo one of your illustrations with the aim of making it better. There are 6 revisions due and the lowest 3 scores will be ignored.

Discussion Participation (15% of your grade) can be earned discussion participation by participating in class discussions, by watching recordings of class discussions and posting a discussion response post on Canvas, or by posting discussion questions and replies.

Grade Breakdown:

- 10% - Reading Quizzes** (25, lowest 5 dropped)
- 20% - Perusall Annotations** (25, lowest 5 dropped)
- 40% - 500 Word Papers and/or Idea Illustrations** (10, lowest 4 dropped)
- 15% - Revisions** (6, lowest 3 dropped)
- 15% - Discussion Participation**

Class Grade Rubric:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 100-94% = A | <77-74% = C |
| <94-90% = A- | <74-70% = C- |
| <90-87% = B+ | <70-67% = D+ |
| <87-84% = B | <67-64% = D |
| <84-80% = B- | <64-60% = D- |
| <80-77% = C+ | <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. 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 (or anyone else), *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite me on your writing assignments in this class, unless you want to. Plagiarism or other academic integrity violations, like hacking into Canvas and changing your grade to an A++++, may result in a zero on the assignment or in other point reductions.

Office Hours, Email Communication, and Due Date Extensions

If you have questions or comments about the course it is best to talk during office hours. I do not have scheduled office hours. If you would like to meet, you can either email me to set up a time to meet, or book an appointment in the open appointment slots via the link on Canvas. I am available to meet outside those slots, so email me if those slots do not work. If you contact me via email, please include "PHI 3695" in the subject line so that I know you are emailing about this course. 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, ideally you should do the assignment earlier, rather than waiting to fall behind and then asking for an extension.

Resources

My website has resources on reading, writing, and researching at dannyweltman.com/resources.html. These resources include a glossary for unfamiliar words or phrases, some of which occur in some of the readings for this course. I encourage you to examine these resources.

Schedule

Each day's reading has an accompanying reading quiz and Perusall annotation assignment, both of which are due 10 AM that day. You should aim to complete them much earlier than 10 AM. You have 24 hours after the due date to add replies to comments that others have written on Perusall. Lectures for the readings should be

watched before the readings, although sometimes the lecture will note that it can be watched after the reading instead.

Optional Background Reading: Noonan, *Personal Identity* Chapter 1

Aug 30: Nothing (course introduction)

Sep 1: Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*

Sep 6: Williams, “The Self and the Future”

Sep 8: Oyowe, “Physical Continuity, Self and the Future”

Sept 13: Schechtman, “The Narrative Self”

Sept 15: Mackenzie, “Personal Identity, Narrative Integration, and Embodiment”

Sep 20: Olson, *What Are We?* Chapter 2, “Animals”

Sept 22: Bailey and Pruss, “Human Beings Among the Beasts”

Sep 27: Parfit, “Personal Identity”

Sep 29: Jeske, “Persons, Compensation, and Utilitarianism”

Oct 4: Wolf, “Self-Interest and Interest in Selves”

Oct 6: Parfit, “Comments” (Response to Wolf, pp. 832-7, only)

Oct 18: Korsgaard, “Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency”

Oct 20: Rovane, “Reductionism, Self-Constitution, and the Moral Significance of Personal Identity”

Readings for the rest of the weeks will be chosen by vote. If you have topic suggestions, please let me know sooner rather than later. Possible topics include:

Personal Identity: Animalism, Buddhism, Conventionalism, Dead Bodies, Death, Fetuses, Narrativism, No-Self Views, Parfit, Phenomenology, Relational Theories, Soul Theories

Ethics: Abortion, Advanced Directives, Egoism and Altruism, Prudence, Responsibility, Split Personality, What We Owe to Future Selves

Final Schedule After Votes:

Oct 25: Wilkes, “Multiple Personality and Personal Identity”

Oct 27: Radden, “Am I My Alter’s Keeper? Multiple Personality Disorder and Responsibility”

Nov 1: Whiting, “Friends and Future Selves”

Nov 3: Parfit, “Personal Identity and Rationality”

Nov 8: Sullivan, “Personal Volatility”

Nov 10: Andersen, “I Have Got a Personal Non-identity Problem: On What We Owe Our Future Selves”

Nov 15: Albahari, “Against No-Atman Theories of Anatta”

Nov 17: Chadha, “Eliminating Selves and Persons”

Nov 22: Mackie, "Personal Identity and Dead People"

Nov 24: Shoemaker, "The Insignificance of Personal Identity for Bioethics" (introduction and death section only) and Purves, "The Significance of Personal Identity for Death"

Nov 29: Stokes, "Are there dead persons?"

Dec 1: Carter, "Will I Be a Dead Person?"