

PHIL 1  
Winter 2024  
MW 6:30-7:50pm  
University Lecture Hall 1000

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HMNSS 3218  
Office hours MW 5-6:15pm, o.b.a.

# Introduction to Philosophy



*What are truth, reality, rationality, and knowledge? Is there one truth or many? Does science tell us everything there is to know? Is faith rational? Should we always be rational? Can our minds be purely physical? Do we have free will? Are there moral truths? How can such questions be answered?*

This course offers an intensive introduction to the basic concepts, terminology, distinctions, arguments, theories, and methodologies of contemporary philosophy. It will also provide a brief introduction to the history of philosophy. It is designed to serve as a foundation for upper-level courses in philosophy; however, it also provides a good introduction for students who do not plan on pursuing further philosophy courses but want to be exposed to the basics of philosophy as part of a general liberal arts education.

## Requirements

### Reading and lectures

Carefully reading the assigned texts is important. The lectures regularly go beyond the content of the assigned readings. Regular attendance at lecture is expected. If you anticipate logistical difficulties, let me know and we will try to work something out.

Students should exercise courtesy to their instructors and fellow classmates by avoiding the use of distracting applications during lecture, including email, web browsing, chat programs, etc.

## **Sections**

Sections are required, meet once a week, and count for 10% of your grade. Attendance at section is mandatory; in order to miss a section, you must seek approval from your TA. Depending on the circumstances, your TA may require you either to attend another section that same week or else to complete a make-up assignment.

Attendance is not the only component your TA will consider when assessing your section grade. The degree and quality of your engagement with the content of the course will also be considered. “Quality of engagement” may be understood in this way: the degree to which the questions you ask in section and office hours, and the comments and contributions you make, show that you have done the reading, thought hard about the concepts and arguments discussed in the lecture and the readings, and have attempted to critically engage with the material.

Most philosophical research is, in one way or the other, a collaborative process. Therefore one of the skills we hope to teach you is how to work with others on philosophical problems. You will practice doing this in your homework groups (see below), but also in section. Your TA will therefore also be assessing how you develop at *engaging constructively* with others in the course sections. (Engaging constructively does not mean that one never criticizes an argument or distinction that someone else has put forward. However, it does mean that when one engages in such criticism, the goal is collective philosophical progress—constructing a better argument, making a better distinction, developing a better theory. This goal should be expressed in the content of what you say and in the tone with which you say it.) Our goal is to create an environment in which focus is put on the arguments, distinctions, and theories, and not on the people that happen to be presenting them.

Always bring the reading materials assigned for the week to your section.

## **Midterm Paper**

There will be a 1200 word paper due around midterm. We will provide a detailed explanation of the point of writing papers in philosophy and show you how to write them. It is fine to discuss your paper ideas with other students; however, you must write your paper on your own. Detailed guidelines for doing so will be provided. Your paper will be worth 30% of your grade.

## **Final Exam**

We'll have an in-person final exam during the end-quarter exam period. The questions on it will be similar to the ones on your homework assignments, so you should be well-prepared for it when the time comes. It will account for 40% of your final grade.

## **Homework Assignments**

There will be four homework assignments. Students are to work on their assignments in groups of four. Each group needs to belong to one discussion section. As soon as you have a group, send the names of your group members, and a name for your group, to your TA. Each group will submit one set of answers for the entire group. The grade given to those answers is the grade every member of the group receives for that assignment. Each homework is worth 5% of your final grade. Together, they are worth 20%.

## **Late Assignments**

Late writing assignments will be penalized one third of one letter grade (i.e., A- becomes B+) every 24 hours, starting ten minutes after the deadline. Exceptions to the lateness policy will be made in cases we deem exceptional.

## **Accessible Education Information**

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks for the SDRC to review the request. You can request a letter of accommodation on the R'Ability website.

For more information, please visit the SDRC website ([www.sdrc.ucr.edu](http://www.sdrc.ucr.edu)), visit the CAE at 1228 Student Services Building, or contact them by phone at (951) 827-3861.

## **Texts**

There are two required books for the course:

- Rachels, James, and Stuart Rachels. *Problems from Philosophy*. Third ed. McGraw-Hill, 2011.
- Snare, Francis. *The Nature of Moral Thinking*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.

These books are on reserve at Rivera Library. They may be checked out there for two hours at a time. Other readings will be available on the Canvas course website.

The readings will often be difficult to understand. You should not expect to understand everything the first time. Lecture and section are there to help you understand them better. You should plan to read them in advance, however, since both the lecture and section will assume that you have done so. Given the relative difficulty of the reading, the number of pages is limited.

## Schedule of Topics<sup>1</sup>

1. *The scientific worldview and its limits & Basic concepts and distinctions*: No reading
2. *Rules of rationality: constructing and evaluating arguments*
  - Gary Kemp, “What is this Thing called Philosophy of Language?”, xxi-xxviii (review)
  - Alissa Ney, “Preparatory Background: Logic for Metaphysics”, from her *Metaphysics: An Introduction*
  - Rachels & Rachels, “Appendix: How to Evaluate Arguments”, in *Problems*, pp. 176-184
3. *Truth, Knowledge, and Relativism*
  - Snare, “Relativism in General”, chapter 7 in *The Nature of Moral Thinking*
4. *God, Religion, and Faith*
  - Rachels & Rachels, “God and the Origin of the Universe” and “The Problem of Evil”, chapters 2-3 in *Problems*
  - Snare, “Moral Thinking and Philosophical Questions” and “Authoritarian Ethics and Subjectivist Ethics”, chapters 1-2 in *The Nature of Moral Thinking*
5. *Logical Positivism, Verificationism, and Phenomenalism*
  - Alex Miller, “Sense and Verificationism”, from his *Philosophy of Language*.
  - Ney, “Propositional Logic”, from her *Metaphysics: An Introduction*
6. *Naturalism, Non-Naturalism, and Placement Problems*
  - Miller, “The a priori”, and “Skepticism about sense”, from his *Philosophy of Language*.

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<sup>1</sup> Schedule is subject to change

7. Mind, Matter, and Consciousness

- Rachels & Rachels, “Body and Mind” and “Could a Machine Think?”, chapters 6-7 in *Problems*.

8. Free Will

- Rachels & Rachels, “The Case against Free Will” and “The Debate over Free Will”, chapters 8-9 in *Problems*.

9. Ethics and Political Philosophy

- Snare, “Some Classic Ethical Theories” and “Metaethical Theories”, chapters 3 and 5 in *The Nature of Moral Thinking*.
- Snare, “Hume’s Gap and the Naturalistic Fallacy”, chapter 6 in *The Nature of Moral Thinking*

10. The History of Philosophy

- Selections TBD

11. Alternative Traditions

- Selections TBD