

Philosophy 1050
Introduction to Philosophical Problems.
Winter, 2009.

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Course description.

This course is an introduction to philosophy, philosophical questions and philosophical thinking. Philosophers generally try to answer such broad questions as, is there a God and why do some people believe that there is? What is the nature of knowledge and how is it distinct from other kinds of belief? How is the mind related to the brain? What makes an action right or wrong? What makes a person virtuous? These are difficult and complex questions, it would be impossible to cover them adequately in one semester. So this course will focus on only a few philosophical topics and provide you with a basis for developing your own philosophical thinking.

One of the main objectives of this class is to familiarize you with the critical approach to philosophy, which involves identifying and critically evaluating the reasons (or 'arguments') offered for various kinds of claims. Like any skill, developing the critical approach requires practice. Just like practice in sports or music makes you a better athlete or musician, so does practice in critical philosophy makes you a better thinker.

Expectations:

Please note that you are expected to show up to every class or tutorial section and to have completed the required reading for that day. You are also expected to participate in class and online discussion. Note also that plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and will be fully prosecuted. See the university calendar for a definition of "plagiarism" if you are unfamiliar with the meaning of this term.

Grading:

Class participation: 10%
Quizzes and tutorial assignments: 30%
First Paper: 25%
Second Paper: 35%

Reading:

The primary text for this class is Andrew Bailey's, *First Philosophy: Fundamental Problems and Readings in Philosophy*. All page numbers in the course outline refer to this text, unless specified otherwise.

There is a Courselink page for the class. It is accessible via the "Courselink" icon on the uoguelph homepage. This page is very important. Please note that several of the required readings are available only via this site. You are responsible for downloading these readings yourself. I also encourage you to make use of the discussion boards on the class courselink page to post philosophical questions and responses for fellow class members.

Course Outline

Week 1: The identification and analysis of arguments - Part 1.

01/05 – Lecture: Introduction to philosophy; overview of this class.

01/07 – Lecture: How to identify and reconstruct deductive arguments.

Read: E. Sober's "Chapter 2, Deductive arguments" (courselink).

Tutorial: Meet fellow tutorial members, receive Week 2 assignment.

Week 2: The identification and analysis of arguments - Part 2.

01/12 – Lecture: Inductive and abductive arguments.

Read: E. Sober's "Chapter 3, Inductive and Abductive arguments" (courselink).

01/14 – Lecture: Evaluating arguments.

Read:

Tutorial: Discuss Week 2 assignment; receive Week 3 assignment,

Week 3: Can theism be rationally justified?

01/19 – *****In Class Quiz on Argument Analysis***.**

- Lecture: Introduction to the philosophy of religion.
- No reading, prepare for quiz.

01/21 – Lecture: Aquinas's five arguments for theism.

- Read: Aquinas, "Summa Theologicae" (36-42).

Tutorial: Discuss Week 3 assignment (reconstruction of Aquinas' 3rd and 4th arguments).

Receive Week 4 assignment on Judge Jones ruling against intelligent design. .

Week 4: The design argument for creationism.

01/26 – Lecture: The design argument, a brief history.

-Read: William Paley, "Natural Theology" (courselink).

01/28 – Lecture: Charles Darwin's reply to Paley.

Read: U.S. District Court Ruling, Judge J. Jones,

"Tammy Kitzmiller et al vs the Dover School District" (courselink)

Tutorial: Discuss Week 4 assignment; receive week 5 assignment on Pascal's Wager.

Week 5: How could an all powerful, all loving God allow for evil?

02/02 – Lecture: The argument from Evil.

-Read: J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (p. 104-114).

02/04 – Lecture: Are there on-rational justifications for religious belief?.

Read: William James, “The Will to Believe” (p. 115-133).

****Receive first paper assignments****

Tutorial: Discussion of Week 5 assignment on Pascal’s Wager (reading on Courselink)

Week 6: Is religion a cultural or a biological construction?

02/09 –Lecture: Cultural and evolutionary explanations of religion.

Read: F. Nietzsche, “Beyond Good and Evil” (702-710).

02/11 – Lecture: The psychology of religious belief.

Read: TBA

*****In class Quiz on the philosophy of religion*****

Tutorial: Overview of how to write papers for this class.

Week 7: Reading week.

02/16 - No classes

02/18 - No classes.

Week 8: When, if ever, are knowledge claims justified?

02/23 –Lecture: The point of epistemology and the skeptical method.

- Read: Descartes, “Meditation 1 & 2” (145-154).

02/25 –Lecture: Can knowledge be grounded in certainty?

Read: Descartes, Meditation 3 & 5” (154-161; 165-168).

Tutorial: TBA

Week 9: Is the mind distinct from the brain?

03/02 – Lecture: what most people believe about the relationship between mind/body.

Reading: Descartes, “Sixth Meditation” (168-176).

*****First papers Due*****

03/04 – Lecture: Three problems with Cartesian dualism.

Reading: Gilbert Ryle, “Descartes’ Myth” (396-404).

Tutorial: TBA

Week 10: If all actions have causes, how could there be free will?

03/09 – Gilbert Ryle + Ghost in the machine

03/11 – Lecture: Skepticism about the existence of free will?

Reading: Paul Ree, “The Illusion of Free Will.” (492-507).

Tutorial: **prepare for quiz**

Week 11: Is science the ultimate source of knowledge?

03/16 – *****quiz on Descartes and the mind-body problem.*****

Lecture: can free will be reconciled with determinism?

*****receive final paper topics*****

03/18 Lecture: If there’s no free will, what happens to responsibility?”

Read: Susan Wolff, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility” (564-575).

Tutorial: distinguishing science from pseudoscience

Week 12: Is science the ultimate source of knowledge?

03/23 – –Lecture: Science vs pseudoscience –Distinguishing science from pseudoscience

Read: Karl Popper, “Science: conjectures and refutations” (330-338).

03/25 - Lecture: is there a scientific method?

Read: Karl Popper, “Science: conjectures and refutations” (338-352).

Tutorial: Science as a social practice

Week 13: Is science the ultimate source of knowledge?

03/30 Lecture: Criticisms of “the scientific method”.

Reading: Khun, “Objectivity, Value Judgment, Theory choice (374-87).

04/01 – *****In class Quiz on Free will and philosophy of science *****

Lecture: course wrap up.