

FYSM 1208: LOOKING AT PHILOSOPHY
CARLETON UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR KEN FERGUSON

COURSE SYLLABUS

TERM:	Fall/Winter Terms, 2014/15	OFFICE:	Paterson Hall, 3A Rm 51
TIME:	Mon/Wed: 16:05-17:25	OFFICE HOURS:	TBA
LOCATION	TBA	PHONE:	Office: (613) 520-2600
INSTRUCTOR:	Ken Ferguson	EMAIL:	kenneth.ferguson@carleton.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the nature of philosophy by looking at some of the most important problems and issues that have occupied the attention of philosophers throughout history. Questions to be discussed include the following: What is rational thought? Does God exist? Can God's existence be reconciled with the fact that there is much pain and suffering in the world? Is genuine knowledge of the world possible, and, if so, how? What are persons? Could a robot ever be a person? Do we have free will? Does life have any meaning, and does it matter whether it does? Is there such a thing as the good life, or the best way to live our lives? Does morality have an objective existence? What would a just state be like?

In discussing these, and other, issues it is important to keep in mind that our goal is not merely to express our own opinions; rather, we will be engaged in an *inquiry*. We want to know what positions might be adopted with respect to these issues, what arguments have been, or might be, offered for and against these different positions, and we want to subject these arguments to a rigorous critique in order to determine, to the extent that this may be possible, where the truth of the matter lies. Although the instructor will sometimes present his own views about the issues, no attempt will be made to "convert" students to his point of view. Rather, the primary role of the instructor will be to guide students through the readings, to ensure that discussions remain focused on relevant and important issues, and to illustrate the processes of interpretation, analysis and criticism by repeated example in class.

AIMS OF THE COURSE

In addition to learning about a new subject with which they may not previously have been familiar, it is hoped that students will benefit from the course in the following respects:

- Improve their reading, writing, speaking and presentation and other essential skills
- Become better able to adopt a reflective, critical attitude toward their own beliefs and assumptions
- Acquire the reasoning and analytical tools needed to engage in intelligent discussion of philosophical issues
- Recognize how philosophy bears on real world questions about how to live one's life
- Develop the ability to adopt a (constructively) critical attitude toward their society

REQUIRED TEXT

Consider Philosophy, by Bruce Waller (New York: Prentice-Hall, 2011) This text is available in the University Bookstore. It will be supplemented by online readings, as well as some readings posted on CuLearn.

(An additional text, or course pack, may be used for the winter semester.)

CLASS ATTENDANCE

As this course is a seminar, regular attendance at class is essential to success, and students are fully responsible for any material they miss due to absence. Readings will be assigned for each class, and students will be expected to have read them and to be prepared to discuss them. The emphasis in the course will be on reasoning, analysis and critical evaluation of issues and texts. (An attendance sheet will be passed around at each class.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Essays 20%:** Students will be required to write several short essays during the course of the year. These will be discussion essays which require analysis and evaluation of some issue rather than research papers involving extensive use of library, Internet or other sources.
2. **Research Paper 20%:** Students will be required to submit a major term paper on some issue, or issues, relevant to the course material. An early draft of the term paper should be submitted by March 1. The final draft will then be written in light of the instructor's comments.
3. **Take-Home Exams 20%:** There will be a take-home exam at the end of each term. The questions for these will be made available to students in the last week of each semester, and the completed exam will be due in the philosophy drop box (on level 3A of Paterson Hall) later in the exam period.
4. **Class Presentations 20%:** Two presentations will be required, one in each term. One of these, and possibly both, will take the form of participation in a debate, and so will involve team work.
5. **Class Participation 20%:** Students are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to class discussion. Evaluations will be based on both the frequency and quality of contributions to the discussion.

More details will be provided about each of these requirements when we meet in class.

CuLearn

Students must ensure that they have access to the CuLearn for this course, as course notes and other information and material will be posted on it. (If you do not know how to access it, please let me know.)

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS: FALL SEMESTER

I. Introduction: Nature of Philosophy as a Subject
Text, Chapter 1, "Thinking Critically and Cordially about Philosophy", pp. 1-3
II. Philosophical Methods: Reason and Argument
Text, Chapter 1, "Thinking Critically and Cordially about Philosophy", pp. 3-14
III. Philosophical Skepticism and the Possibility of Knowledge
Text, Chapter 3, "What Can We Know?", pp. 63-75
Readings in Text:
1) Descartes, Meditations I and II

2) Ludwig Wittgenstein, selections from *On Certainty*

Additional Readings Online:

- a) G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World":
<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil1000/Moore1.pdf>
- b) Bertrand Russell, Chapter 2, "The Existence of Matter" from *The Problems of Philosophy*:
<http://www.ditext.com/russell/russell.html>
- c) Steven Luper, "Essential Knowledge: General Introduction":
<http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/sluper/Introduction%20from%20Essential%20Knowledge.htm>

IV. The Nature of Thought: Are There Any Innate Ideas?

Text, Chapter 4, pp. 91-104

Online Readings

- a) Lex Newman, "Descartes' Epistemology", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Section 1.5 "Innate Ideas": <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes-epistemology/#1.5>
- b) Peter Markie, "Rationalism versus Empiricism", section 4, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/#4>
- c) Noam Chomsky, "On Language", at: <http://www.answers.com/topic/language-chomsky-s-theory>
- d) "Chomsky's Universal Grammar" from the website: *The Brain from Top to Bottom*, sponsored by McGill University, available at http://thebrain.mcgill.ca/flash/capsules/outil_rouge06.html
- e) Curtis Brown, "Kant: An Overview", at: <http://www.trinity.edu/cbrown/modern/kant.html>

V. Does God exist? And Other Philosophical Questions about Religion

Text, Chapter 2, "Philosophical Questions about Religion", pp. 24-40

Readings in Text:

- 1) St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
- 2) Leibniz, *Theodicy*
- 3) Stephen Jay Gould, "Non-Overlapping Magisteria"
- 4) Richard Dawkins, "You Can't Have it Both Ways: Irreconcilable Differences"

Additional Readings Online:

- a) St. Anselm, selections from *Proslogium*, <http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/anselm.htm>
- b) Richard Taylor, "The Cosmological Argument: A Defense", <http://mind.ucsd.edu/syllabi/02-03/01w/readings/taylor.pdf>
- c) Ron Rosenbaum, "Has The Meaning of Nothing Changed?" from the website www.slate.com (to view article Google title)
- d) William Paley, selections from *Natural Theology*:
<http://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/introbook2.1/x4063.html>
- e) YouTube Interview with philosopher Richard Swinburne on the problem of evil:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jARkbwgejgU>
- f) (Optional reading) "Arguments for Atheism", from the website *Investigating Atheism* by Cambridge University: <http://www.investigatingatheism.info/fordisbelief.html>
- g) Richard Dawkins, "The Improbability of God":
http://www.secularhumanism.org/library/fi/dawkins_18_3.html

VI. The Mind/Body Problem

Text, Chapter 6, pp. 157-173

Readings in Text

- 1) Descartes, Meditation 6
- 2) Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like To be A Bat?"

Additional Readings Online

- a) *Website: The Mind Project* – Read the following modules: Functionalism: An Introduction; The Turing Test; Artificial Intelligence: Can a Machine Think?; and Searle and the Chinese Room Argument. Available at: <http://www.mind.ilstu.edu/curriculum/list.php?sortBy=category>

VII. What Are Persons?

Text, Chapter 7, "Personal Identity", pp. 196-210

Readings in Text

- 1) John Locke, selections from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
- 2) David Hume, selections from *A Treatise of Human Nature*
- 3) Derek Parfit, "Reasons and Persons"

Additional Readings Online

- a) David Anderson, "What Is A Person?", available at The Mind Project website
http://www.mind.ilstu.edu/curriculum/what_is_a_person/what_is_a_person.php

VIII. Do We Have Free Will?

Text, Chapter 8, Fatalism, Determinism, and Free Will, pp. 230-237

Text, Chapter 9, "Is Free Will Compatible With Determinism?", pp. 257-270

Readings from Text

- 1) Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
- 2) Susan Wolf, "Asymmetrical Freedom"

Additional Online Readings

- a) Patricia Churchland, "The Big Questions: Do We Have Free Will?", in the *New Scientist Magazine*, November, 2006, available at: <http://web.missouri.edu/~segerti/1050H/docs/churchlandFreeWill.pdf>

Text, Chapter 10, "Are We Morally Responsible?", pp. 288-301

Readings from Text

- 1) C.A. Campbell, "Selfhood and Godhood"
- 2) Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck"
- 3) Daniel Dennett, "Elbow Room"
- 4) Bruce Waller, "Uneven Starts and Just Deserts"

BRIEF OUTLINE OF TOPICS FOR THE WINTER SEMESTER

- 1) **Psychological Egoism**
 - a. What is P.E.?
 - b. Major Figures Who Have Defended P.E.
 - c. Arguments for P.E.
 - d. Evolution and P.E.
 - e. Bishop Butler's critique of P.E.

- 2) **What Is the Meaning of Life?**
 - a. Nihilism
 - b. The Religious outlook
 - c. Existentialism – we create meaning
 - d. Deconstructing the issue – meaning doesn't matter

- 3) **Death: Is It a Good Thing or a Bad Thing?**
 - a. Can medicine give us immortality?
 - b. Epicurus – Death is nothing to fear
 - c. Thomas Nagel – Death is a bad thing
 - d. Bernard Williams – Death is necessary for life to have meaning

- 4) **How Should We Live Our Lives?**
 - a. Hedonism – pleasure gives value to life
 - b. Egoism – we should pursue our own happiness
 - c. Stoicism and Buddhism
 - d. Doing good as the value of life
 - e. Projects of value give life meaning and purpose

- 5) **Is Morality Objective?**
 - a. Moral realism
 - b. Moral skepticism
 - c. Subjectivism
 - d. Relativism
 - e. Emotivism
 - f. Prescriptivism
 - g. Constructivism

- 6) **What is a Just Society?**
 - a. Plato's Republic
 - b. Rawls' theory of justice
 - c. Libertarianism
 - d. Human rights and the just state

- 7) **Why Should We Obey the Law?**
 - a. Anarchism
 - b. Utilitarianism
 - c. Contract Theory

- 8) **Broadening the Scope of Morality**
 - a. Global ethics
 - b. Rights of future generations
 - c. Animal rights
 - d. Environmental rights

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2014-15)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips
- must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box)
- must include the following:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv14/>)

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website:

<http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website:

<http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam

requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Important Dates:

Sept. 4	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 17	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 13	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Oct. 27-31	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 8	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 9	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 10-21	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Dec. 21	Take-home exams are due.
Jan. 5	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 16	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 16-20	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 24	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Apr. 8	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for Fall/Winter and Winter term courses.
Apr. 8	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 9-10	No classes or examinations take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 11-23	Final Examinations. Exams are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	Take-home exams are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/sasc 520-7850
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 th Floor, Library http://www1.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/ 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735