

Syllabus: Phil 001
Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality
De Anza College
Fall Quarter, 2014
Instructor: Toño Ramirez
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Office Location: Forum Building, Room 2D
Office Hours: Monday 1:20-3:20 PM, Thursday 3:20-4:20 PM



Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods and practices of philosophy through a rigorous investigation of central topics pertaining to traditional themes in epistemology and metaphysics. Students will engage key readings and ideas from the history of philosophy, and will find that the themes encountered bear heavily on current issues, events and popular culture. The course will focus on three primary topics: The nature and scope of knowledge, understandings of reality, and the nature of personhood. Our discussions will culminate in an investigation of the relevance of these topics to the possibility of a meaningful life.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully engage with course materials will be able to:

- Identify and articulate philosophical problems pertaining to the nature of knowledge and reality.
- Compare approaches and attempted solutions to these problems from a variety of philosophical traditions.
- Defend an original position on at least one philosophical issue.
- Describe the relevance of epistemological and metaphysical problems to contemporary popular concerns.

Course Expectations and Requirements

- Students who are considering dropping the course for personal reasons are encouraged to meet with me first—I'm happy to do what I can to help you succeed in this class! To this end, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours.
- Reading assignments are *required* in this course. I understand that some of the reading will be challenging, and that it may not be fully understood without subsequent in-class explanation. Nevertheless, I expect that students will read the texts assigned.
- As a significant portion of the course will involve class discussion of texts, it is expected that students will have completed assigned readings *before* the corresponding class meeting.
- Participation in discussions will be evaluated according to the *quality* of student comments, and not quantity. Students who demonstrate excellence in discussions will attend closely to the comments of other students, and offer remarks that are of relevance to the discussion at hand. It is expected that students will engage one another's ideas in discussion, and that this will be done in a respectful manner. Neither disparaging remarks nor personal attacks will be tolerated in any way.
- Class discussions will frequently feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.
- Cell phones must be turned off during class. Students who need to leave a phone on for emergency purposes should let me know at the beginning of the class session. Text messaging is incompatible with active participation in class activities, and will not be permitted during class time.

Student Assessment:

- Paper assignments:
 - All students will submit [one short essay](#), and one [longer essay](#).
 - Essays will be evaluated according to [standards provided with assignment prompts](#). Standards for each paper will also be addressed verbally in class at the time of assignment. It is expected that students who remain unclear as to the standards of excellent written work will meet with the instructor *before* the assignment is due. “Re-writes” are not accepted for paper assignments. I am happy to review advance drafts of papers with you **in person**, but not via email.
 - Academic honesty is imperative in written work. I will spend time in class discussing plagiarism, and will take measures to help students avoid accidental plagiarism. **Any** plagiarized paper submitted to me will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the assignment, with no re-write option. In the event that an extra credit assignment is plagiarized, the full amount of the eligible extra credit will be deducted from your course total. Repeat instances will automatically result in an “F” in the course. Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Academics.
 - Students who are unsure about standards for academic honesty should [review this tutorial](#), and consult with me. In short, **any uncited material, presented as your own original work**, constitutes plagiarism. This includes uncited quotes from internet and print sources. **There will be no exceptions to this policy.**
 - Paper Assignments turned in on time will be graded and returned with comments within one week of the due date. Students may submit assignments up to one week after the due date at no penalty, but I make no guarantees for a prompt return. I will not accept any papers that are turned in after this time.
 - I practice blind grading to ensure impartiality in evaluating student work. Students **should not** write their names on the front of any paper assignment. Rather, the name should be written lightly in pencil on the back of the last page.
- Exams:
 - These **may not** be ‘made up’. If you know in advance that you will be unable to attend one of these exams, contact me as soon as possible—I will do what I can to accommodate you.
- Attendance buffer:
 - Students may miss a total of *four* class meetings without penalty during the term. A fifth absence will result in the loss of the “attendance buffer” (explained below) when final grades are calculated. A seventh absence will result in dismissal from the course.
 - Students are *not* required to provide the instructor with a reason for absence, nor are apologies necessary. I assume that absences will only occur under legitimate circumstances.
 - Students who miss a class meeting are responsible for obtaining any information or assignments they may have missed.
 - Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class on a daily basis. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his/her name has been recorded accurately on daily attendance sheets.
 - Students are expected to come to class *on time*. Three late arrivals will be considered equivalent to one absence on the attendance record.

- [Argument Paper](#): 2 pts extra credit (OPTIONAL)
 - Students may earn up to 2 extra percentage points in the course by submitting an argument paper. Argument papers are described in detail on the “Assignments” page of the course website, and will be explained verbally in class. Only one argument paper may be submitted for the course.

Final grades will be awarded according to the following:

	With attendance buffer	Without attendance buffer
Short Essay	25	25
Longer Essay	35	35
Exams (Averaged)	30	40
Attendance Buffer	10	0

GRADE SCALE: A+ (100-97), A (96-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), D+

Course Reading Schedule

(n.b.: The schedule is subject to change at my discretion. Links to alternative online versions of the first few readings are given for those students who need extra time to acquire the course reader)

Knowledge and Skepticism: What can we know?

- 4/7
- 4/8
 - Introduction to course
 - [Read Plato, excerpt from *Republic*](#)
- 4/9
- 4/10
 - [Read Descartes, “First Meditation”](#)
 - [Read Descartes, “Second Meditation”](#)
- 4/14
- 4/15
- 4/16
- 4/17
 - Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
 - [Read Hume, “Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding”](#)
- 4/21
- 4/22
- 4/23
- 4/24
 - Read Greene, “You Perceive With Your Mind”
 - Read Moore, “Certainty”
 - Read Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion”

Faith and Miracles: When should we believe?

- 4/28
- 4/29
 - Read Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
 - Read Long, “Religious Pragmatism through the Eyes of Luke Skywalker”
- 4/30
- 5/1
 - Read Korcz, “Coke into Pepsi”
 - [First Exam](#)
 - **Argument paper date**

Metaphysics: What kind of a universe is this, and what kinds of things are we?

- 5/5
- 5/6
- 5/7
- 5/8
 - Read [The Diamond Sutra](#)
 - Read Baur, “The Beatles and Idealistic Monism”
 - [First Essay Due](#)
 - **Argument paper date**
- 5/12
- 5/13
 - Read “They’re Made of Meat”
 - Read Searle, “Minds, Brains and Machines”
- 5/14
- 5/15
 - Read Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”
 - Read Jacquette, “Zombie Gladiators”
 - **Argument paper date**
- 5/19
- 5/20
 - In class film

- 5/21 ■
- 5/22 ■ **No class meeting**
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Freedom, Personhood, and Responsibility: Is it ever really your fault?

- 5/26 ■
- 5/27 ■ Read Hauser, “Zombies, *Blade Runner*, and the Mind-Body Problem”
- Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
- Read Timmons & Shoemaker, “Free Will...”
- **Second Exam**
- 5/28 ■
- 5/29 ■ Read Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”
- Read Darrow, “Leopold and Loeb”
- **Argument paper date**
- 6/2 ■
- 6/3 ■ In class film
- 6/4 ■
- 6/5 ■ Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
- Read Kinghorn, “Is the Hulk the Same Person as Bruce Banner?”
- 6/9 ■
- 6/10 ■ Read Parfit, “The Unimportance of Identity”
- 6/11 ■
- 6/12 ■ Read Sartre, “The Wall”
- Read Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”

Searching for the Meaning of Life: What exactly are we looking for, and can we find it?

- 6/16 ■
- 6/17 ■ Read Taylor, “The Meaning of Life”
- Read Nagel, “The Absurd”
- Review for final exam
- 6/18 ■
- 6/19 ■ Read Wallace, “Kenyon College Commencement Address”
- (if you prefer to listen to an audio version of this speech, you can find part one [here](#), and part two [here](#))
- **[Final essay due](#)**
- **Third Exam**
- 6/23 ■
- 6/24 ■ **No class meeting**
- 6/25 ■ **No class meeting**
- 6/26 ■ **No class meeting**
- 6/27 ■ **No class meeting**

Texts

The sole text required for this course is the [PHIL01 Course Reader](#), available at the De Anza Bookstore. Any additional course readings can be linked above, or will be provided to you in electronic format

Course Website

Electronic copies of course materials, announcements, and other course resources are available at
<http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/phil01>