

Syllabus: Phil 001

Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality

De Anza College

Fall Quarter, 2018

Instructor: Toño Ramirez

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Office Location: Forum Building, Room 2D

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-2:30 PM, M/W 12:30-1:30 PM, or by appointment



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:
 - A series of brief exams will be given during the quarter. These multiple-choice exams will focus exclusively on the content of our readings and class discussions. The exams will not be cumulative (i.e. the content for the second exam will not be drawn from readings during the first third of the quarter, etc.).
 - Exams **may not** be ‘made up’. In the event that you miss an exam, it will be recorded as a grade of 0, and will constitute your lowest exam score. If you know that you will need to miss an exam in advance, an early exam may be scheduled at the instructor’s discretion.
 - An optional, cumulative final exam will be offered at the end of the quarter. The format of this exam will be free response, and the score earned will replace the lowest of your multiple choice exam scores, whether for higher or lower.
- Homework assignments:
 - Many of our readings will feature corresponding homework exercises. Readings and exercises are due by **the beginning of class on the date specified in the schedule**. For example, if the schedule indicates that you are to read Ramirez, “Introduction to Philosophy Article” for the date 3/1, then you should have completed both the reading and homework exercise (if applicable) by the beginning of class on 3/1.

- Homework exercises are assigned as a mechanism for encouraging you to keep up with the class reading, and by extension to prepare you for our discussions.
 - Homework will be submitted electronically, unless otherwise indicated.
 - Late homework will not be accepted, and will be recorded as meriting 0 points. *However...*
 - Your lowest 2 homework scores will be disregarded when calculating your final “Homework Assignment” score for the quarter. This means that if you happen to miss a homework assignment, it will not affect your final grade for the course.
- 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 student 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.
 - **There will be no ‘extra credit’ assignments/activities associated with this course.**

Final grades will be awarded according to the following:

	With attendance buffer	Without attendance buffer
Short Essay	20	20
Longer Essay	30	30
Exams (Averaged)	30	30
Homework Assignments	10	20
Attendance Buffer	10	0

Grade Scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage Range
A+	96.5-100
A	92.5-96.4
A-	89.5-92.4
B+	86.5-89.4
B	82.5-86.4
B-	79.5-82.4
C+	76.5-79.4
C	69.5-76.4
D+	66.5-69.4
D	62.5-66.4
D-	59.5-62.4
F	0-49.4



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?

- 9/24 ■ Introduction to course
- 9/25 ■ [Read Plato, excerpt from Republic](#)
- 9/26 ■ [Read Descartes, "First Meditation"](#)
- [Read Chuang Tzu, "Butterfly Dream"](#)
- 9/27 ■ [Read Descartes, "Second Meditation"](#)

- 10/1 ■ [Read Hume, "Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding"](#)
- 10/2 ■ [Read Greene, "You Perceive With Your Mind"](#)
- 10/3 ■ Read Moore, "Certainty"
- 10/4 ■ Read Chisholm, "The Problem of the Criterion"

- 10/8 ■ [First Exam](#)
- 10/9 ■ In class film
- 10/10 ■ In class film
- 10/11 ■ In class film

Faith and Miracles: When should we believe?

- 10/15 ■ Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
- 10/16 ■ Read Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"
- 10/17 ■ Read Long, "Religious Pragmatism through the Eyes of Luke Skywalker"
- 10/18 ■ Read Korcz, "Coke into Pepsi"

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

- 10/22 ■ Read Ney, "An Introduction to Ontology"
- 10/23 ■
- 10/24 ■ Read Churchland, "Dualism: For and Against"
- 10/25 ■ Read [The Diamond Sutra](#)
- **First Essay Due (Prompt available in Canvas)**

- 10/29 ■ Read "They're Made of Meat"
- 10/30 ■ TBA
- 10/31 ■ Read Searle, "Minds, Brains and Machines"
- 11/1 ■ Read Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience"

- 11/5 ■ [Second Exam](#)
- Read Ney/Hazlett, "[The Metaphysics of Race](#)"
- 11/6 ■ No reading assigned
- 11/7 ■ Tuvel, "In Defense of Transracialism"
- 11/8 No reading assigned

Freedom, Personhood, and Responsibility: Is it ever really your fault?

- 11/12 ■ NO CLASS (Veterans Day)

- 11/13 ■ In class film
- 11/14 ■ In class film
- 11/15 ■ In class film

- 11/19 ■
- 11/20 ■
- 11/21 ■
- 11/22 ■ NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

- 11/26 ■ Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
- 11/27 ■ Read Kinghorn, “Is the Hulk the Same Person as Bruce Banner?”
 - Read Parfit, “The Unimportance of Identity”
- 11/28 ■ Read Timmons & Shoemaker, “Free Will...”
 - Read Darrow, “Leopold and Loeb”
- 11/29 ■ Read Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

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

- 12/3 ■ Read Sartre, “The Wall”
- 12/4 ■ Read Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”
 - Read Taylor, “The Meaning of Life
 - Read Nagel, “The Absurd”
- 12/5 ■
- 12/6 ■ 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](#))
 - [Third Exam](#)
 - **Final essay due (Prompt available in Canvas)**

- 12/11 ■ **No class meeting**
- 12/12 ■ **No class meeting**
- 12/13 ■ **No class meeting**
- 12/14 ■ **PHIL01.01 (10:30 AM Section) Final Exam from 9:15-11:15 AM**
- 12/15 ■ **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>