

Course: Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 10101-04
Instructor: Daniel Immerman
MWF 11:30-12:20 in 118 O'Shaughnessy

Contact Info

Email: dimmerma@nd.edu
Office: 213 Malloy
Office hours: 2-4 on Monday or by appointment
Course website: <http://www3.nd.edu/~dimmerma/teaching/10101-04.html>

Readings

You do not need to purchase any texts for this class; all readings will be available on the website.

Course Description

This course will introduce students to some of the topics that philosophers discuss and to some of the ways they go about discussing them.

Some questions we will explore include: Do we have a moral obligation to donate to charity? When, in general, should we morally do one thing, as opposed to another? And what kinds of things are moral obligations anyway? Do we have a moral obligation to refrain from eating meat? Can skeptical arguments successfully show that we are ignorant about various things? Do we and our society produce and maintain ignorance in unjust ways? How strong are the arguments for and against the existence of God? If the arguments for the existence of God are not decisive, is it acceptable to believe in God anyways?

Course Goals

In this course you will:

- Improve your ability to identify an author's main claims in a philosophical text and to restate them in your own words clearly and precisely.
- Improve your ability to locate and reconstruct arguments and objections from philosophical texts.
- Improve your ability to state and evaluate objections to arguments.

- Become familiar with some of the positions and debates in several branches of philosophy.
- Work out for yourself your own position on several of these debates.
- Learn how to identify a philosophical topic you are interested in, find others who have written on it, understand key terminology related to it, identify a research question related to it, and write a paper on it.

Expectations

In order to ensure that these goals are achieved, I will need some help from you. In particular, many of the course goals require you to develop your philosophical skills, which in turn requires practice.

With each reading assignment, I will provide some questions for you to think about as you do the reading. Answering these questions will help you hone your philosophical skills.

In addition to practicing these skills at home, you will also be practicing them in class. To accommodate this, the classes will not have much lecturing in them. Because most of the time spent in class will be time when you are talking, it is integral that you come to class prepared and ready to participate.

Evaluation

Here is the breakdown of grades in the class:

- Throughout the semester, I will assign mini papers, which will range in length from a few sentences to a full page. These will each be worth the same amount and will be worth 35 percent of your grade in total. I will drop your lowest mini paper grade.
- During the second half of the course, you will be working on a longer paper, which will ultimately be at least 1500 words. I will not assign a topic, instead, you will be responsible for selecting it. Early in the second half of the semester, you will turn in a short document called a prospectus that will describe the topic you have chosen, some relevant readings, and what you plan to argue in your paper. This will be graded pass/fail and worth 3 percent of your grade.

- Near the middle of the second half of the course, you will turn in a rough draft of your paper. Again, this will be graded pass/fail, and worth 3 percent of your grade.
- The final draft of the paper will be due near the end of the semester, and worth 30 percent of your grade.
- There will be an open-note quiz at the end of the semester that confirms that you've been paying attention in class and doing the readings. This will be worth 5 percent of your grade.
- During the day scheduled for the exam, we will have a "salon" in which you discuss your paper with your peers. This will be graded pass/fail and worth 4 percent of your grade.
- I will also be grading you based on participation. I will pass out a rubric on the first day that indicates what you need to do to get a good participation grade. Participation is worth 20 percent of your grade.

I will be using a 12 point scale:

A = 12

A- = 11

B+ = 10

B = 9

B- = 8

C+ = 7

C = 6

C- = 5

D = 3

F = 0

I may on occasion give assignments a 13, which would correspond to an A+, or a 14, which would correspond to an A++. (The highest final grade I can give is an A).

On rounding: if the first decimal of a grade is 5 or higher, I will round up, and if it is 4 or lower, I will round down. So e.g. a 9.499 is a B, while a 9.500 is a B+.

Academic Honesty

The university academic code of honor is available at <http://honorcode.nd.edu/>. The philosophy department also has a document on plagiarism, which is available at <http://philosophy.nd.edu/assets/77703/plagiarism.pdf?>. I take issues of plagiarism very seriously. If you're ever in doubt about an issue in this area, please come talk to me.

ADA statement

If you think you might need an accommodation because of a disability, you can contact me privately. Please also contact the Office of Disability Services. Their contact information is available at <http://disabilityservices.nd.edu/about/contact>

Attendance

If you miss class, you should provide me with a University-approved excuse. In addition to these absences, I will give you two free days to miss class. After that, I will take off 1 grade point on your participation grade for every day of class you miss (see grading scale)

Late Papers

I will not accept late mini papers because we will be discussing them in class. But you can turn in one other item up to 2 days late with no penalty to your grade. If you turn in further late items, I will take off 1 grade point for every day its late (see grading scale). I don't round down on days. That means that if you turn in a paper an hour late, that counts the same as turning it in 23 hours late.

Reading drafts of papers

I will read as many drafts of papers as you care to send me, with the following exceptions. I will not read a draft turned in less than 2 days before the paper is due. Also, if I send a draft with comments back to you, you should wait at least 2 days before sending me a new draft to look at.