

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHL 201H1F

Summer 2015

M, W 6-9pm at SS1072

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**INSTRUCTOR:** Dan Hooley | [daniel.hooley@utoronto.ca](mailto:daniel.hooley@utoronto.ca) | Office Hours: Tues 3-4, JHB 422

☐ Grader: Robert Mason

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In this class we will survey a variety of philosophical questions. Many of these questions are ones that most of us confront, in one way or another, during the course of our lives. What is knowledge and when does something we believe count as knowledge? Does a God exist? How should we understand human freedom? Do human beings have free will? And how ought we to live? How demanding is morality? And what, if anything, is wrong with the growing inequality in our society? This course should give you a pretty good sense of some of the many topics philosophers think and write about. Along with this, you will also learn more about *how* philosophy is done. That is, you will gain a better understanding of how philosophers approach and think about philosophical questions using reason and arguments.

## **REQUIRED TEXT:**

- ☐ *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy* by Simon Blackburn
- ☐ All of the other readings for the course will be posted online via Blackboard.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, you can expect to gain some understanding of several core philosophical issues and sub-fields. You can also expect to have a much clearer sense of how philosophical questions are approached by philosophers. Related to this, another central learning objective for this course is improving your critical thinking skills. Below are some of the skills we will practice and strengthen during the course of the class.

- The ability to read, understand, and summarize complex philosophical arguments. These skills are perhaps best seen in the ability to clearly and plainly explain a philosophical argument to a friend or family member.
- Recognize ambiguous or unclear claims and restate premises and conclusions in a clearer and more precise fashion.
- Identify unstated assumptions central to an argument.
- Write a clear, well-organized, and well-supported philosophical essay.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following components:

- Participation (15%)
- Précis (10%)
- Critical Summary of a Reading (15%)
- 3-4pg Essay (30%)
- Final Exam (30%)

Your participation grade will be based on a variety of components, including: your participation in discussion in class, reading responses, short quizzes, and some 'low-stakes' writing assignments (worth a percentage or two of your total grade). Details on the assignments will be given throughout the course.

## **IMPORTANT DATES:**

Précis	May 27
Critical Summary	June 3
Essay	June 17
Final Exam	TBA (June 22-26)

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

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\*The schedule and selection of readings are tentative and may be changed or modified during the course.

### **MAY 11: Introduction to Philosophy**

- ❑ *Think* | Introduction | p.1-14 (15)

### **MAY 13: Reasoning, Knowledge, and Skepticism**

- ❑ "Logical Toolkit" | p.9-14 (6)
- ❑ Descartes | Selections from *Meditations on First Philosophy* | p.50-63 (14)
- ❑ *Think* | Chapter 1: Knowledge | p.15-48 (34)

### **MAY 18 - \*NO CLASS, VICTORIA DAY\***

### **MAY 20: Arguments for/against the existence of a God**

- ❑ William Paley | Selection from *Natural Theology* | p.47-51 (5)
- ❑ David Hume | Selection from *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* | p.45-53 and p.67-71 (14)

- ❑ J.L. Mackie | “Evil and Omnipotence” | p.200-212 (13)
- ❑ Peter van Inwagen | “The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil” (8)

### **MAY 25: Freedom**

- ❑ Peter van Inwagen | “The Power of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will” | p.385-396 (12)
- ❑ Adina Roskies | “Neuroscientific challenges to free will and responsibility” (5 )
- ❑ *Think* | Chapter 3: Free Will | p.81-105 (25)

### **May 27: Personal Identity**

- ❑ John Perry | “A Dialogue on Personal Identity” | in *Philosophical Inquiry* (14)
- ❑ *Think* | Chapter 4: The Self | p.120-148 (29)

### **JUNE 1: Ethical Objectivity**

- ❑ James Rachels | “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” | p.14-31 (18)
- ❑ Shafer-Landau | *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?* | Ch’s 1-2 (9)
- ❑ Shafer-Landau | “Eleven Arguments against Moral Objectivity” | p.322-341 (20)

### **JUNE 3: Ethical Theory**

- ❑ John Stuart Mill | “ Utilitarianism” | (17)
- ❑ Russ Shafer-Landau | “The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect” (18)
- ❑ Julia Annas | “Virtue Ethics” | (14)

### **JUNE 8: How Demanding is Morality?**

- ❑ Peter Singer | “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (15)
- ❑ Peter Singer | “Common Objections to Giving” | in *The Life You Can Save* p.23-44 (21)
- ❑ Susan Wolf | “Moral Saints” (20)
- ❑ *Media*: Watch “The why and how of effective altruism” | Peter Singer TED Talk (17min)

### **JUNE 10: Animals and Morality**

- ❑ Lori Gruen | “Eating Animals” (from *Ethics and Animals*) | p.76-105 (30)
- ❑ Tom Regan | *Empty Cages* Ch’s 3-4 | p.37-74 (38)
- ❑ *Media*: Watch “Farm to Fridge” (Youtube) | (12min)

### **JUNE 15: Sexism and Race**

- ❑ Simone de Beauvoir | “Introduction to the *Second Sex*” | xiv - xxxv (17)
- ❑ Ann Cudd and Leslie Jones | “Sexism” | p.102-115 (16)
- ❑ Charles Mills | “‘But What Are You Really?’ The Metaphysics of Race” | p.41-66 (25)

## **JUNE 17: Justice and Inequality**

- ❑ John Rawls | Selection from *A Theory of Justice* | p.572-585 (13)
- ❑ Robert Nozick | Selection from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* | p.585-592 (8)
- ❑ Iris Marion Young | “Five Faces of Oppression” | p.3-22 (20)
- ❑ *Media*: Watch “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Wealth Gap” (Youtube) | (14min)

## **COURSE POLICIES**

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**LATE PAPERS AND EXAMS:** Late papers will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made before the assignment is due (at least 2 days prior to the due date), or you have a documented medical or family emergency. No late exams will be given, except in the case of medical or family emergencies.

**NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:** I expect that the essays you submit for this class are the product of your own work, and are not plagiarized by other sources. Prior to the first essay we will review how to avoid accidental plagiarism. If you don't know what counts as plagiarism, I encourage you to ask me. You may also consult the [U of T's instructions on how not to plagiarize](#).

**ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS:** Students with different needs and learning styles are welcome in this course, and any student with a disability will be accommodated. If you have a disability, or need accommodation for specific learning needs, please see contact [Accessibility Services](#) and/or contact me.

**TURNITIN.COM:** You are required to submit your essay to [Turnitin.com](#) for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing this, you will allow your essay to be included as a source document in the Turnitin.com reference database, where it will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service can be found on Turnitin.com.

**EMAIL POLICY:** I will do my best to respond to student emails within 48 hours (if it is not the weekend, I will usually respond much sooner than this). I only ask that you make sure the information you are seeking is not available on the course webpage or the syllabus. If your question cannot be easily answered via an email, I will suggest you meet me during my office hours, or after class to discuss the matter. Please do not email the TA.

**LAPTOPS & PHONES:** I want to encourage you all to not use laptops and other techno gadgetry (tablets, phones, etc.) during class. There is [pretty good evidence](#) that students do

better in university classes when they take notes by hand. And notes covering the main arguments covered in class will be provided via Blackboard. One of the reasons I do this is so that you don't have to worry about summarizing the main arguments/ideas we are considering. So instead of hastily trying to copy down much of what I say, you can instead focus on understanding and evaluating the arguments we are considering. If you'd prefer, you can use a laptop or tablet in class, but I ask that you don't use it for purposes other than taking notes.