PHI 2011 Philosophical Reasoning

University of Central Florida

College of Arts and Humanities

Department of Philosophy

Spring 2024

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*Office Hours* M 2:30pm—3:30pm; F 2:30pm—4:30pm

Course Description

This course will teach you how to think like a philosopher. You will learn to use tools of philosophical reasoning such as Socratic questioning, analysis, counterexamples, thought experiments, analogies, and paradoxes. We will also study argument forms commonly deployed in philosophy, including arguments from common sense, Leibniz’s Law arguments, infinite regress arguments, and arguments from analogy. Our case studies will be drawn from both contemporary and historical works of philosophy.

Texts

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will be provided electronically.

Assessment

* Participation (10%)

Active participation is essential to your success in this course. Please speak up during class as often as you can. Here are some ways to do that: respond to a question, raise an objection, follow-up on another student’s comment, or ask a simple clarification question (ex. “Can you explain X again?” or “What does X mean?”). In addition, certain classes will be devoted to reviewing the homework exercises. You can increase your participation grade by frequently volunteering to share your answers with the class.

* Homework (15%)

Nine homework assignments, due on starred (\*) Fridays in the reading schedule below. You will receive a grade of complete (✓) or incomplete (x) for each of the nine homework assignments. Come to class prepared to share your answers. Requirements for a grade of complete: (i) submit the exercises **before class** on the relevant day, and (ii) a good faith effort to complete the assignment in its entirety. The chart below shows how this portion of your final grade will be determined:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Final Homework Grade | Requirements |
| A | 9 ✓ |
| A- | 8 ✓ |
| B | 7 ✓ |
| C | 6 ✓ |
| D | 4 or 5 ✓ |
| F | > 4 ✓ |

* Argument Reconstruction Paper (15%)

One very short (2 pp. max) argument reconstruction paper, worth 15% of your final grade. Prompts and writing advice will be distributed roughly two weeks beforehand.

* 3 Tests (20% each)

Three in-class exams, equally weighted, and based on roughly one-third of the semester’s content. Questions will be a combination of multiple-choice, matching, and short answer. I will provide more information about format and content a couple of weeks before the first exam.

Attendance Policy

You are allotted **four** penalty-free absences throughout the semester, which you can take whenever you want, for whatever reason, and without notifying me ahead of time. However, every subsequent unexcused absence will adversely affect your final course grade in the following manner: the first additional unexcused absence lowers your course grade by 1 percentage point, the next absence lowers your course grade by 2 percentage points, the third by 3 percentage points, the fourth by 4 percentage points, and so on. I will use the UCF Here app to take attendance at the beginning of every class.

# Make Up Policy

Please let me know if you must miss an exam due to an official university activity or a religious holiday. We will find an alternative date and time that fits your schedule. Unfortunately, I cannot accept late or make up papers except in extraordinary circumstances.

Accessibility Policy

I am committed to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are eligible for accommodations, please contact UCF’s Student Accessibility Services by phone at (407) 823-2371, by email at [sas@ucf.edu](mailto:sas@ucf.edu), or in Ferrell Commons 185. Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodations requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with Section I of UCF’s Rules of Conduct. Here is the University’s description of the potential consequences of academic misconduct: “Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an “F” letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a “Z” designation on one’s transcript. Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.”

# Schedule of Readings1

Week 1: Philosophy and Arguments

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 1/8 | W 1/10 | F 1/12\* |
| **Course Overview** | **Introduction to Arguments** | **Arguments and Love of Wisdom** |
| N/A | *Power of Logic*, Ch 1.1 | * Plato, *Apology* * Homework #1 |

Week 2: Argument Forms

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 1/15 | W 1/17 | F 1/19\* |
| **MLK Day** | **APA Eastern** | **Valid Argument Forms** |
| No Class | No Class | * *POL*, Ch. 1.2 pp. 14—24 * Homework #2 |

Week 3: Testing for Validity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 1/22 | W 1/24 | F 1/26\* |
| **Valid Argument Forms** | **The Famous Forms Method** | **Forms and Validity** |
| *POL*, Ch. 1.2 pp. 25—28 | * *POL,* Ch. 1.2 pp. 25—28 * *POL*, Ch 1.3 pp. 33—36 | Homework #3 |

Week 4: Testing for Invalidity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 1/29 | W 1/31 | F 2/2\* |
| **The Counterexample Method** | **Categorical Statements** | **The Counterexample Method** |
| * *POL*, Ch 1.3 pp. 33—36 * *POL*, Ch 1.3 pp. 33—39 | *POL*, Ch 1.3 pp. 39—47 | Homework #4 |

Week 5: Socratic Questioning

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 2/5 | W 2/7 | F 2/9 |
| **Test #1** | **Socratic Questioning** | **Socratic Questioning** |
| N/A | Plato, *Meno* | Plato, *Meno* |

Week 6: Philosophical Analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 2/12 | W 2/14 | F 2/16\* |
| **Philosophical Analysis** | **Philosophical Analysis** | **Socratic Questioning** |
| Plato, *Euthyphro* (1a—6e) | Plato, *Euthyphro* (7a—11d) | Homework #5 |

1 Note: this schedule is **tentative**. It is subject to change based on student needs, instructor illness, and/or COVID-19 related disruptions. I will distribute an updated schedule if and when such changes occur.

Week 7: Infinite Regress Arguments

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 2/19 | W 2/21 | F 2/23 |
| **Infinite Regress Arguments** | **Infinite Regress Arguments** | **Infinite Regress Arguments** |
| Plato, *Parmenides* (132a—b) | Plato, *Parmenides* (132a—b) | Aquinas, “The Second Way”  Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1094a) |

Week 8: Counterexamples

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 2/26 | W 2/28 | F 3/1 |
| **Counterexamples** | **Counterexamples** | **Counterexamples** |
| * Ayer, “Knowledge as the Right to be Sure” * Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” | * Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” * Zagzebski, “The Inescapability of Gettier Cases” | Homework #6 |

Week 9: Arguments from Commonsense

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 3/4 | W 3/6 | F 3/8 |
| **External World Skepticism** | **External World Skepticism** | **Common Sense** |
| Descartes, First Meditation | Descartes, Second Meditation | Moore, “Proof of an External World” |

Week 10: Arguments from Commonsense

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 3/11 | W 3/13 | F 3/15 |
| **Review Session #2** | **Test #2** | **Catch-up and/or open discussion** |
| Study Guide #2 | N/A | Homework #7 |

Week 11: Spring Break

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 3/18 | W 3/20 | F 3/22 |
| **Spring Break** | **Spring Break** | **Spring Break** |
| N/A | N/A | N/A |

Week 12: Thought Experiments in Ethics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| M 3/25 | W 3/27 | F 3/29 |
| **Abortion** | **The Trolley Problem** | **The Trolley Problem** |
| Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” | Thomson, “The Trolley Problem” | Homework #8 |
| \*Argument Reconstruction paper due | N/A | N/A |

Week 13: Leibniz’s Law Arguments

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 4/1 | W 4/3 | F 4/5 |
| **Material Constitution** | **Substance Dualism** | **Substance Dualism** |
| Olson, “Material Constitution” | Descartes, Second Meditation | Descartes, Second Meditation |

Week 14: Thought Experiments in Metaphysics

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 4/8 | W 4/10 | F 4/12 |
| **Body Swapping** | **Body Swapping** | **Fission** |
| Locke, “The Prince and the Cobbler” | Reid, “Of Mr. Locke’s Account of Personal Identity” | Parfit, “Personal Identity” |

Week 15: Paradoxes

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| --- | --- | --- |
| M 4/15 | W 4/17 | F 4/19 |
| **The Sorites Paradox** | **The Sorites Paradox** | **Vagueness** |
| Frances, “Why the Vagueness Paradox is Amazing” | Frances, “Why the Vagueness Paradox is Amazing” | Homework #9 |

Week 16: Test #3

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| --- |
| M 4/22 |
| **Test #3** |
| Study Guide #3 |