

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 20101 01

12:30–1:45 Tuesdays and Thursdays

Hayes Healy Center 127

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Office: 213 Malloy

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00–12:00 and Wednesdays 2:00–3:00

## Course Description:

When we do philosophy, we attempt to use reason to resolve seemingly irresolvable disputes about the nature of the world and our place in it. Our central goal in this course is to develop the ability to do just that. In our pursuit of this goal, we will explore questions like: How can we live good lives? What do we know? Does God exist? How should we improve society? To reach our goal, we will have to improve our ability to use reason. This course will provide the resources to do so; we will develop skills in argumentation, logic, and precision of thought. This course will also provide the opportunity to practice these skills; large portions of class time and many assignments will be dedicated to the application of these skills in collaborative discussion.

**Texts:** *For the Sake of Argument: How to Do Philosophy* by Robert M. Martin; *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* by John Perry. More material will be provided on the course website. **NB:** It might not be necessary to purchase physical copies of the texts used in this course.

## Grade Distribution:

Participation	15%
Podcasts	40%
First Paper	20%
Second Paper	25%

**Letter Grade Distribution:** In this course I will use the following scale to convert between numerical and letter grades:

$\geq 93.00$	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	$\leq 59.99$	F

## Honor Code:

Students are responsible for compliance with the University's honor code at all times. Notre Dame has extensive guidelines on the honor code. Additionally, the philosophy department has a document explaining how Notre Dame's honor code applies to writing philosophy papers. Links to both of these can be found on the course website.

I take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating of any kind will be reported, will result in a failing grade on the assignment, and might lead to even stronger penalties. Any particular questions about the honor code should be directed to me.

## Accessibility:

Notre Dame and I are committed to making this course accessible to all students. Any student who has (or thinks they may have) a disability, or who have questions about disability, are invited to talk to me or to contact the Office of Disability Services for a confidential discussion in the Sara Bea Learning Center for Students with Disabilities, or by phone at 574-631-7157. All information given to Disability Services is confidential and is shared only with your consent. Students who believe they may need an accommodation for this course should contact the Office of Disability Services at their earliest opportunity to ensure there is time to complete the process before accommodations are actually needed. Additional information about Disability Services and the process for requesting accommodations can be found at [disabilityservices.nd.edu](http://disabilityservices.nd.edu).

Further, there are other support services available on campus. I especially encourage students to take advantage of the Writing Center.

## Assignments

**Attendance:** It is impossible for a student to participate if they do not attend class. It is also difficult to learn the material without attending and participating. Students who have more than two unexcused absence will have points deducted from their overall grade.

In part to assist me in tracking attendance, students will write small reflections at the end of most class sessions. In these reflections, students will answer two questions: (1) what was the most memorable thing you learned today? (2) what are you still confused about or would like to hear more on? I will use these reflections to guide future class sessions.

**Participation:** Philosophy is an activity that we do, and active participation in philosophy is the best way to learn to do philosophy. Each student is expected to interact with me and with other students inside and outside of class. It's important to note, though, that active participation is more than just being vocal; it requires carefully thinking through issues and engaging with peers, often by listening to, supporting, clarifying, or justifying their comments. Doing philosophy is not just about expressing your own ideas, but is just as much about engaging with the ideas of others. Metaphorically speaking,

the ideal philosophical discussion is less like a tennis match and more like a volleyball game.

To develop these oft-neglected skills, students will work in a changing arrangement of groups throughout the semester. Each student's participation grade will be primarily determined by the extent to which they follow the aforementioned model of active participation. The remainder of the participation grade will be determined by participation in class-wide discussions, office hours, email correspondences, etc.

**Podcasts:** For each unit, students will collaborate in their groups to produce 10 minutes of philosophical conversation. In these conversations, students will use the material covered in class to describe and debate a philosophical issue found by the group "in the wild". These conversations will be recorded, sent to me, and graded on the extent to which they demonstrate (i) mastery of the material discussed, (ii) ability to prioritize material, and (iii) skill in active participation. Students will be guided through the first of these podcasts.

**Papers:** Each student will write two papers ( $\approx 4$  pages) for this course. The first paper will be on material covered in Unit 1 or Unit 2. The second paper will be on material covered in Unit 3 or Unit 4. We will treat the writing of these papers as weeks-long projects and not as overnight binges. In addition, for the second paper students will share drafts for peer review. (This peer review process will be worth 5% of the overall grade.) Late papers will be deducted one third of a letter grade for each day late (A to A-, etc.).

## Reading List and Schedule:

[See attached.]

<b>Schedule</b>			
Date	Topic	Required Material	Supplemental Material
<b>Key:</b> <b>FSA</b> is Robert M. Martin's <i>For the Sake of Argument: How to Do Philosophy</i> <b>DPII</b> is John Perry's <i>A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality</i>			
Tuesday, Jan 16	Introductions	Syllabus	<b>FSA</b> - Introduction
<b>Unit 1 - Reasoning</b>			
Thursday, Jan 18	Some philosophical concepts	<b>FSA</b> - Chapters 1 + 2	
Tuesday, Jan 23	Epistemic goals	James, "The Will to Believe", Section VII	<u>Briggs, "Balancing Our Epistemic Goals"</u>
Thursday, Jan 25	Lying, bullshit, and other epistemically pernicious practices	Frankfurt, "On Bullshit", pages 42--67	<u>Tosi and Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding"</u>
Tuesday, Jan 30	Methods of reasoning	<b>FSA</b> - Chapters 5 + 6	<u>The Argument Clinic</u>
Thursday, Feb 1	Sources of knowledge	<u>Nagel on some features of knowledge</u>	<u>Hare on science and the knowledge argument</u>
Tuesday, Feb 6	Skepticism	<u>Sextus Empiricus, The Ten Modes (Outlines of Skepticism I.xiv)</u>	Descartes, Meditations 1 + 2
Thursday, Feb 8	Using and evaluating arguments	<b>FSA</b> - Chapter 7/8/9*	<b>FSA</b> - Chapter 7/8/9*
<b>Podcast #1</b>			
<b>Thursday, Feb 15, by 11:59PM EST</b>			
<b>Unit 2 - Reality</b>			
Tuesday, Feb 13	God and the ontological argument	<u>Youtube video feat. Zimmerman and Plantinga</u>	<u>van Inwagen, "Ontological Arguments"</u>
Thursday, Feb 15	God and the problem of evil	<u>van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil, the Problem of Air, and the Problem of Silence" (Sections I and II)</u>	<u>van Inwagen, "The Argument from Particular Horrendous Evils"</u>
Tuesday, Feb 20	Free will and divine foreknowledge	<u>Holton on the problem of free will</u>	<u>van Inwagen, "What Does an Omniscient Being Know about the Future?"</u>
Thursday, Feb 22	Free will and responsibility	<b>FSA</b> - Chapter 10	<u>Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"</u>

<b>Schedule</b>			
Tuesday, Feb 27	Personal identity + the soul	<b>DPII</b> - First Night	<a href="#">Bailey, et al., "No Pairing Problem"</a>
Thursday, Mar 1	Personal identity + memory	<b>DPII</b> - Second Night	<i>Black Mirror</i> - S4E6
Tuesday, Mar 6	Personal identity, or the lack thereof	<b>DPII</b> - Third Night	<b>FSA</b> - Chapters 3 + 4
<b>Podcast #2</b>	<b>Tuesday, Mar 20, by 11:59PM EST</b>		
<b>First Paper</b>	<b>Friday, Mar 9, by 11:59PM EST</b>		
<b>Unit 3 - Ethics</b>			
Thursday, Mar 8	Moral realism	<b>FSA</b> - Chapter 11	<a href="#">SEP article on moral anti-realism</a>
<b>Tuesday, Mar 13</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>No Class!</b>	
<b>Thursday, Mar 15</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>No Class!</b>	
Tuesday, Mar 20	Euthyphro dilemma	<a href="#">Antony, "Good Minus God"</a>	
Thursday, Mar 22	Consequentialism	<a href="#">Mill's Utilitarianism, Chapter II</a>	<a href="#">Parfit on the repugnant conclusion</a>
Tuesday Mar 27	Deontology	O'Neil, "Kantian Ethics"	Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie"
Thursday, Mar 29	Virtue	<a href="#">MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues"</a>	<a href="#">Woolf, "Moral Saints"</a>
Tuesday, Apr 3	Moral Luck	<a href="#">Philosophy Bites podcast, Fiery Cushman on moral luck</a>	Williams and Nagel, "Moral Luck"
Thursday, Apr 5	Moral Dilemmas	<a href="#">Greenspan, "Moral Dilemmas and Guilt"</a>	<a href="#">Sophie's Choice, feat. Meryl Streep</a>
<b>Podcast #3</b>	<b>Thursday, Apr 12, by 11:59PM EST</b>		
<b>Unit 4 - Social Stuff</b>			
Tuesday, Apr 10	Animal Ethics	<a href="#">Singer, "Speciesism and Moral Status"</a>	<a href="#">HuffPo blogpost on Christian vegetarianism</a>
Thursday, Apr 12	Civil disobedience	<a href="#">Aquinas's Summa Theologica I-II, Question 96, Article 4 (skim the other articles of ST I-II Q96)</a>	King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
Tuesday, Apr 17	Consent	<a href="#">Dougherty, "Yes Means Yes: Consent as Communication"</a>	Weirtheimer's <i>Consent and Sexual Relations</i>
Thursday, Apr 19	Abortion	Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"	Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
Tuesday, Apr 24	Gender	<a href="#">de Beauvoir's The Second Sex, Introduction</a>	<a href="#">Butler on gender performance</a>
Thursday, Apr 26	Friendship	<a href="#">Isserowe, "On Having Bad Persons as Friends"</a>	<a href="#">Fonda and Tomlin discuss friendship</a>

<b>Schedule</b>			
Tuesday, May 1	Catch up and/or peer review		
<b>Podcast #4</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 8, by 11:59PM EST</b>		
<b>Paper Due</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 9, by 11:59PM EST</b>		