

PHIL 100: *Introduction to Philosophy*
Fall 2007

* **An unexamined life is not worth living.**

* **Everyone has opinions, but few think.**

Class meeting time: T R 1:00-2:15 pm

Classroom: LH 402

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Instructor: Dr. JeeLoo Liu

Office location: H-311A

Office hours: T/R 2:30 – 4:00 pm

or by appointment

**Text: *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*
 (13th Edition) (ed.) Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau**

Course description:

This course is designed to give students an overall picture of the issues with which philosophers throughout history have been concerned. The topics covered will include the examination of our knowledge about the world, the nature of mind and consciousness, the problem of free will versus determinism, as well as the nature of moral responsibility. Students must be prepared to keep an open mind about various ideas and be willing to suspend any dogmatic belief. Do not expect to have one final answer that the whole class would accept. What is more important than finding answers, is the process of thinking in our attempt to find answers. Classes will be in the lecture/discussion format. There will also be four debates or panel discussions on various topics. All students are required to participate in one debate.

- Course objectives:**
- (i) To learn to read some philosophical writings and understand their basic arguments.
 - (ii) To learn to criticize others' arguments and to develop the ability to formulate one's own arguments.
 - (iii) To cultivate one's ability for independent and critical thinking.
 - (iv) To cultivate the habit of reflection on, and examination of, one's own ideas.
 - (v) To restore one's sense of wonderment and one's ability to question.

Learning Goals:

This course meets the **General Education** learning goals of category **III. B. 2—Introduction to the Humanities**—in the following ways:

- 1) By developing understanding of philosophical thought and methodologies, which represent an important example of the humanistic perspective.
- 2) By developing understanding of why and how philosophical thought and methodologies originated and evolved as they have.
- 3) By exploring differences and similarities between how philosophy makes sense of the world and our experience and how other perspectives make sense of the world and our experience.
- 4) By developing understanding and appreciation of how philosophy contributes to the political and cultural institutions of contemporary society.
- 5) By familiarizing students with key theories and methodologies in Western philosophy.
- 6) By requiring the application of philosophical ideas and arguments to values, experiences, and meanings in one's own life and using that application to help understand what it means to be human today.
- 7) By cultivating and assessing writing skills in the following ways:
 - a. short study questions, to be completed for every session
 - b. essay assignments
 - c. essay exams
 - d. promoting critical thinking and reading skills, which play an essential role in good writing.

Grading: One paper (3 pages)	20 %
Study Questions (see policy #2, #3)	20 %
Mid-term exam (in class)	20 %
Final exam (non-cumulative)	20 %
Debate or panel discussion	10 %
General participation	10 %
Full attendance	2 points extra credit

To receive a final grade for the course, no portion of your grade can be a “zero”.

COURSE GRADES: Calculated on the following scale

97-100	A+	74-76	C
94-96	A	70-73	C-
90-93	A-	67-69	D+
87-89	B+	64-66	D
84-86	B	60-63	D-
80-83	B-	Under 60	F
77-79	C+		

Academic Dishonesty:

“Academic dishonesty is comprised of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means.” The most commonly observed form of academic dishonesty is copying others’ writings on the Internet. Even when you are merely borrowing a single sentence from someone else, doing so without proper quotation marks and author-attribution counts as plagiarism. **Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will automatically fail the course.** Students with questions about how to cite others’ work should see the instructor.

Class Attendance and Participation:

Students must be conscientious about attending classes on a regular basis. Any consecutive absences must be given proper explanation. Students are allowed to miss three classes without prior explanation (however, full attendance will be rewarded with two extra points in the final average). To excuse your absences from that point on, you will need to present credible documentation. Class participation includes active discussion in class, raising relevant questions, answering questions, and paying close attention in class. **Everyone (each student as well as the instructor) is responsible for making this class interesting, engaging, and thought-provoking.**

Classroom Etiquettes:

Classroom environment is for the instructor and all students to interact with one another in a professional and intellectual manner. Students are expected to observe common classroom etiquettes. Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior. Such behavior includes (but not restricted to)

- (i) constant late arrivals;
- (ii) early departures without proper explanation;
- (iii) chatting with your neighbors during lectures;
- (iv) eating in class;
- (v) doing things unrelated to the course in class, such as reading other books, doing assignments for other courses, or playing with your laptop.
- (vi) **not turning off your cell phone in class.**

Students with repeated disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.

General policies:

1. Students are expected to read the assigned articles prior to class discussion. A list of study questions for each reading will be given out in class. Your ability to answer these questions in class will greatly enhance your participation grade. Always bring the text to class so that we could look at certain passages for close examination.
2. For each reading assignment, I will give out a sheet of study questions the class before. It is your responsibility to obtain these study questions from me should you miss a class.

There will be 21 sheets of study questions throughout the semester. You need to write down the page number and a very brief answer for each question with a mark of * and return to me on the day the assignment is due. **I do not accept late study questions whatsoever.** The grade for this set of assignment will be decided as follows:

21	A+ (=100)	12	C (=74)
19-20	A (=95)	11	C- (=70)
17-18	A- (=90)	10	D+ (=65)
16	B+ (=87)	9	D (=60)
15	B (= 84)	7-8	F (=40)
14	B- (=80)	below 7	0
13	C+ (=77)		

3. **Sharing study questions answers with others is considered cheating. Any student suspected of cheating will be questioned. Students caught cheating will automatically fail the course. All students must hand in the complete set of study questions on the day of the final. If you fail to submit the set of study questions, you will receive a 3-point deduction of the final grade.**
4. Your paper should be double-spaced, word-processed and complete with spell check. **Paper must be submitted in class, in person and on time.** The grade will depend heavily on how much effort was put into the essay. What I wish to encourage is your own reflection on the reading materials. **A grade reduction for late essays will be made in the following manner: half-grade off (e.g. from B to B-) for each day delayed.** I hope you will appreciate the importance of finishing an assigned project on time.
5. Attendance is highly emphasized in this class. **Students are allowed up to three absences without explanation. After the 3rd absence, every absence will constitute a half-grade reduction (3 points off in the final average) in your final grade.** Do not squander your three absences – there are always unexpected things that would prevent you from coming to class on a given day. If you use up your free absences, you will have to take the penalty when you do miss one more class.
6. Exams will be given in the form of essay questions taken from the study questions given out in class. You are expected to give a more complete answer in the exams than what you give on your study answer sheets.
7. **No make-up exam will be given unless you obtain permission from me at least two days in advance or if you present your special reason with acceptable documentation.**
8. Students are expected to arrive on time for exams. Late arrivals will not be given time extension.

9. **To receive a final grade for the course, students must complete all assignments.** In other words, if you get a “zero” for any of the assignments (papers, exams, study questions, participation and panel discussion), you will automatically fail the course.
10. You are encouraged to meet with me during my office hours, send e-mail messages to me, or call me if you have any question regarding the course.

Syllabus

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
T 8/21	Introductory Remarks	None
I. <u>Human Knowledge: Its Grounds and Limits</u>		
R 8/23	(1) John Pollock: A Brain in a Vat * <i>The Matrix</i>	pp. 137-139
T 8/28	(2) René Descartes: <i>First Meditation</i>	pp. 166-168
R 8/30	(3) René Descartes: <i>Second Meditation</i>	pp. 169-173
T 9/4	(4) Bertrand Russell: Appearance and Reality	pp. 157-164
R 9/6	(5) John Locke: A Causal Theory of Perception [I] (from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>)	pp. 197-202
T 9/11	(6) John Locke: A Causal Theory of Perception [II] (from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>)	pp. 202-204
R 9/13	Alternative possibility: Multi-Universe [Video]	None
T 9/18	(7) David Hume: Section IV – Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding	pp. 222-228
R 9/20	(8) David Hume: Sections V & VI – Skeptical Solutions & Of Probability	pp. 228-235
T 9/25	(9) Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutations	pp. 264-268

R 9/27 Paper Workshop **Write up the Introduction paragraph**

Topic: Skepticism and Knowledge (see prompts below)

___ Can we really have knowledge of the world that is so certain that no reasonable man could doubt it? What are the possible reasons for skepticism about the external world? What would be the best defense against skepticism?

T 10/2 Debate [1]: Can we really know the truth about our world? Can our science guarantee truth about the world? What is the nature of *truth* and what criteria can we use to determine whether something is a truth?
[Paper due in class]

II. Can Non-Humans Think?

R 10/4 (10) Alan Turing: Computing Machinery and Intelligence pp. 321-329
* *Star Trek: the Next Generation*

T 10/9 (11) William Lycan: Robots and Minds pp. 342-347

R 10/11 (12) Peter Carruthers: Brute Experience pp. 348-355

T 10/16 (13) John Searle: Animal Minds pp. 356-365

R 10/18 Debate [2]: Can Non-humans Think? Can animals have consciousness or self-consciousness? What explains the differences between robot mind, animal mind and human mind? If we ever encounter extraterrestrial beings, how would we judge whether they have “minds”?

T 10/23 Mid-term Exam

III. Free Will and Determinism

R 10/25 (14) Paul Holbach: The Illusion of Free Will pp. 458-463
* *Gattaca*

T 10/30 (15) W. T. Stace: The Problem of Free Will pp. 419-424

R 11/1 (16) Derk Pereboom: Why We Have No Free Will pp. 464-477

T 11/6 (17) A. J. Ayer: Freedom and Necessity pp. 414-419

R 11/8 Debate [3]: Is the universe determined by physical necessity? Are we determined by our past? To what extent are we determined by our genes, our family rearing,

our background history, etc.? What does it mean to have free will? Is compatibilism a coherent theory?

IV. Freedom and Moral Responsibility

- T 11/13 (18) James Rachels: The Debate over Free Will pp. 478-486
* *Minority Report*
- R 11/15 (19) Harry Frankfurt: Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility pp. 486-492
- T 11/20 **Thanksgiving Vacation**
- R 11/22 **Thanksgiving Vacation**
- T 11/27 (20) Thomas Nagel: Moral Luck pp. 493-500
- R 11/29 (21) Albert Camus: The Myth of Sisyphus [handouts]
- T 12/4 **Debate [4]:** What does it mean to be responsible for our life and our deeds? What are the necessary requirements for our moral responsibility? If we are predetermined to do something, are we still morally responsible for our acts? How much of our success or failure depends on luck? Should we be blamed or praised for things that depend on luck? If not, then what is the basis for the assignment of moral credit?
- R 12/6 **Last class: Review and Reflections**

Final Exam: Tuesday December 11 12:00 - 1:50 PM

*** All students must hand in the complete set of study questions on the day of the final.**