

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
PHL 100
FALL 2008
AUGUST 20 – DECEMBER 5¹

Professor Kukla

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Final Exam: TBA

Textbook

- *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* – Ted Sider & Earl Conee. **MAKE SURE YOU BRING THIS TEXT EACH DAY TO CLASS WHEN WE ARE USING IT.**
- All Non-Sider & Conee readings will be posted on Elearning. **I RECOMMEND HIGHLY THAT YOU PRINT OUT THESE READINGS AND BRING THEM TO CLASS.**

Course Description

Good critical thinking skills are the backbone of philosophy. So we will spend the first few days on critical thinking. In particular, we will examine what makes an argument *good* (or *bad*). This is a helpful skill in all disciplines. After our introduction to critical thinking, we will examine some of the main problems of philosophy, divided into the following four main sections:

(1) **PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

We will examine various arguments for the existence (and non-existence) of God. This will include investigating such questions as: What is the relationship between our concept of God and God's existence? Must there have been a first, un-caused cause or creator of the Universe? Does a world (such as ours) that seems to exhibit order (and design) indicate the existence of an intelligent designer? We will also discuss the difficulty of believing that a benevolent God exists while simultaneously admitting that there is evil in the world. We will end by examining whether it is even rational for one to believe in God.

(2) **PHILOSOPHY OF MIND & PERSONAL IDENTITY**

We will examine several issues concerning the relationship between the mind and the body. For example, are the mind and the body distinct and separate entities? Or are they identical? Are my thoughts, feelings, sensations, etc. something separate from the gray lumpy mass in my head, or are they nothing more than neurons firing around in my brain? We will also be examining such questions as to whether machines can (or could ever) think, and issues concerning personal identity – what makes a person stay the same over time despite radical changes.

¹This document was written in [L^AT_EX](#).

(3) **FREE WILL & DETERMINISM**

Are we free? If so, then how do we exercise this free will in a mostly deterministic world? If we are not free, then why do we have the illusion of free will? If we are not free, then what does this mean for moral responsibility? We will try to examine these questions after trying to understand the concepts involved in the debate over Free Will.

(4) **ETHICS**

What, if anything, makes an action moral and immoral? Do we have an obligation to help eliminate famine? Is war, or aggression in general, ever justified? Is abortion morally wrong? We will be discussing these questions by examining the three ethical theories: Utilitarianism; Kantian Ethics, and Virtue Ethics.

(5) **EPISTEMOLOGY**

What exactly do we know, and how do we know it? It seems that we are reading this syllabus. But what proof, the skeptic might ask, can we offer to show that we are not dreaming, hallucinating, or being deceived by some evil demon? We will end by discussing two puzzles of rationality: *The Prisoner's Dilemma* and *Newcomb's Problem*.

Evaluation, Participation, & Grading Scale

- 4 EXAMS: 92% = 4 × 23% (THE FINAL IS NOT CUMMULATIVE)
- PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE: 8%

How to Study

I suggest the following strategy for studying:

- (1) Read the text at least two days prior to class. Ideally, you should read it twice before coming to class.
- (2) Read the relevant lecture notes when it is available.
- (3) After class review the text and lecture notes.
- (4) If you cannot orally explain the concepts in the readings (without looking), my lecture notes (without looking), then that is a good reason to believe that you do not adequately understand the material.
- (5) If (4) is true of you, then you should contact me to schedule an appointment with me to discuss the material.

Attendance

You are allowed no more than 2 unexcused absences to to be eligible for full participation/attendance consideration. After that, you will need documentation to avoid detriment to your grade.

Participation

Students are expected to attend class prepared to discuss critically the assigned readings. If ever the class fails to prepare adequately for class, I reserve the right to administer a quiz for that day.

Grading Scale

- A+ = 97 – 100%
- A = 93 – 96%
- A- = 90 – 92%
- B+ = 87 – 89%
- B = 83 – 86%
- B- = 80 – 82%
- C+ = 77 – 79%
- C = 73 – 76%
- C- = 70 – 72%
- D+ = 67 – 69%
- D = 63 – 66%
- D- = 60 – 62%
- F = < 60%

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices must be turned off before class begins. If a student's electronic device sounds during class, the student will be counted absent for that day.

Disability Access

Students with disabilities should register with the Office of Disability Services, (205) 348-4285. They should then provide the instructor with appropriate documentation and written requests regarding special accommodations. Students who wish to discuss such accommodations are invited to schedule appointments during the instructor's office hours.

Code of Misconduct

The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student.

TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE

WEEK	UNIT	TOPICS
1	Introduction to the course & logic	
2	The Ontological & Cosmological Argument	Philosophy of Religion
3	The Old & New Intelligent Design Argument	Philosophy of Religion, cont.
4	The Problem of Evil & Atheism	Philosophy of Religion, cont.
5	The Mind/Body Problem & Dualism	Philosophy of Mind
6	Behaviorism & Identity Theory	Philosophy of Mind, cont.
7	Functionalism; Consciousness; & Qualia	Philosophy of Mind, cont.
8	Personal Identity & Determinism	Philosophy of Mind, Cont. & Free Will
9	Libertarianism & Compatibilism	Free Will, cont.
10	What is Morality? & Cultural Relativism	Ethics
11	Divine Command & Natural Law Theory	Ethics, cont.
12	Egoism & Utilitarianism	Ethics, cont.
13	Standard Account of Knowledge & Foundationalism	Epistemology
14	Justified-true-belief & Epistemic/Non-Epistemic Accounts of Rationality	Epistemology, cont.
15	The Prisoner's Dilemma & Newcomb's Paradox	Epistemology, cont.