

PHIL 1200 A01 - Introduction to Philosophy: MWF 10:30 – 11:20

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, or by appointment. To meet electronically through Webex, you will need to make a reservation through the course's UM Learn site (go to Communication → Cisco Webex → Appointment booking).

Course Description:

The course is designed to give a broad introduction to some of philosophy's most persistent and engaging problems. Is there a god? Does free will exist? How can we be sure that we know something? What is the relationship between mind and body?

We will approach these issues from a mix of contemporary and historical perspectives, with the goal of developing the skills necessary for evaluating arguments and convincingly presenting one's own opinions.

We will begin the Winter Term by discussing the existence of god and the problem of evil as a challenge to the existence of a supremely benevolent power. Following, we will discuss the conflict between free will and determinism. We will then move to problems related to knowledge, focusing on epistemic skepticism and on possible ways to defeat it. In the third part of the Winter Term, we will discuss questions related to the mind-body problem and consciousness, finishing with an examination of issues related to personal identity.

Online delivery

The course will be delivered synchronously, through Webex. The lectures will be scheduled at the UM Learn website, and you can access them through the site. I will be using a powerpoint presentation, and sharing my screen. The presentations will be available before the lectures on the course's site and will remain there, so you do not need to write down everything that appears on screen during lectures.

Texts

The texts the course will cover will be available on the course's UM Learn website. The two exceptions are the two longer texts, Descartes' *Meditations* and Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, which are easily available online. Please contact me if you have a hard time finding an electronic copy of them.

Assignments/evaluation and grade distribution:

The assignments for this course are:

- *Three short papers* (two pages each), each worth 10% of the final grade
- *One long paper* (4-5 pages in length), worth 20% of the final grade

Marking scale: A+: 90-100; A: 80-89; B+ 75-79; B: 70-74; C+: 65-69; C 60-64; D: 50- 59; F: 0-49.

Academic Integrity:

Please consult the General Academic Regulations and Requirements in your Undergraduate Calendar for information concerning academic integrity, plagiarism, and cheating.

Plagiarism is a serious offense that will commonly result in failing the course and may lead to further disciplinary action. Not all forms of plagiarism are intentional. Some result from the inadvertent failure to properly identify one's sources. It is perfectly admissible to use other people's thoughts and ideas (in fact, philosophers do it all the time) provided that one properly acknowledges others' ideas and works. If you have *any* questions regarding the proper use of sources, or any matter related to academic integrity, please discuss it with me *prior* to turning any written work in.

Important dates:

Monday, February 22: **First short paper due**

Monday, March 15: **Second short paper due**

Monday, April 12: **Third short paper due**

Friday, April 30: **Long essay due**

Tentative class schedule:

<i>Week of</i>	<i>Material Covered</i>	<i>Readings assigned</i>
Jan. 18	Philosophy and religion. Arguments for the existence of god.	- St. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Five Ways</i> - W. Paley, <i>Natural Theology</i>
Jan. 25	Arguments against believing in god. The problem of evil.	- B. Russell, <i>Why I Am Not a Theist</i> - J. Hick, <i>The Problem of Evil</i>

- Feb. 1** Freedom and determinism. - R. M. Chisholm, *Human Freedom and the Self*.
- T. Nagel, *Moral Luck*
- Feb. 8** Freedom and determinism – alternative perspectives - P. F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment*
- H. Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*
- Feb. 22** Basic questions in epistemology Descartes' skepticism. - R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy (ch. I)*
- Mar. 1** Descartes' rationalism. - R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy (chs. II-III)*
- Mar. 8** Hume's skepticism and the problem of induction. - D. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (chs. II-VII)*
- Mar. 15** The mind/body problem. Cartesian Dualism. Behaviorism - R. Descartes, *Meditations (ch. VI)*
- G. Ryle, *Descartes' Myth*
- Mar. 22** Physicalist theories - D. M. Armstrong, *The Nature of Mind*
- P. M. Churchland, *Eliminative Materialism*
- Mar. 29** Responses to Physicalism: The problem of consciousness. - T. Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?*
- F. Jackson, *What Mary Didn't Know*
- Apr. 5** Personal Identity - D. Parfit, *Personal Identity*
- J. D. Velleman, *So It Goes*
- Apr. 12** Paradoxes of personal identity - D. Dennett, *Where Am I?*