

PHIL 100 – Introduction to Philosophy: Problems

Instructor: Nathan Hanna
E-mail: nathan.hanna@lawrence.edu

Office: Main Hall 410
Office Hours: T/Th 11-12

I. Required Texts

Reason & Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy, edited by
Feinberg and Shafer-Landau.
Problems from Philosophy, James Rachels.

The bookstore has the 14th edition of *R&R* and the 2nd edition of *Problems*. However, I recommend using the 13th and 1st editions. You can buy them used online.

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle. Note that access to the Moodle page is restricted. The enrollment key is: *boosh*

II. Course Description

PHIL 100 is an introduction to some of the main problems of philosophy. No prior background in philosophy is required. The class will be divided into four main units.

Unit 1: The Existence of God

We'll examine arguments for and against the existence of God and briefly discuss the nature of belief and justification and their relevance to religious belief.

Unit 2: Free Will

We'll examine arguments concerning whether or not we have free will. In doing so we'll examine different positions that philosophers have taken on the nature of free will and the compatibility of free will with the thesis of causal determinism.

Unit 3: Mind

We'll examine arguments about the nature of the mind and its relation to the body. We'll focus on the possibility of artificial intelligence and on physicalism vs. dualism.

Unit 4: Knowledge

We'll return to discuss in more detail some of the issues we touched on in Unit 1. We'll examine arguments concerning the nature of knowledge and the extent of our knowledge. We'll pay particular attention to arguments about skepticism and arguments pertaining to the possibility of knowledge about the material world, including scientific knowledge.

III. Course Objectives

You won't do well in this course just by memorizing facts. The topics we'll discuss are interesting, but in a sense they're incidental: this course is primarily meant to help you develop various **skills**, among them reading, writing and critical thinking skills. You will do this by 1) examining philosophical texts and arguments and 2) advancing and defending your own arguments in speech and writing. You'll learn to identify and

PHIL 100 – Introduction to Philosophy: Problems

evaluate arguments and to formulate and defend your own arguments. This is very difficult. Academic philosophy demands formalism, rigor and a lot of careful thought.

You're going to have to put a lot of effort into trying to understand the readings. But you'll also have to **think** about the positions and arguments we'll discuss. This means thinking both about the particular readings we cover – e.g., the claims made by particular authors – and more generally about the particular issues discussed in those readings. You have to be prepared to go beyond the readings – e.g., by identifying relevant issues an author may not have discussed and determining how they might bear on the author's arguments and more generally on different arguments and positions regarding the topic at issue. You'll be expected to challenge your beliefs by evaluating arguments for and against those beliefs and also to evaluate positions on issues you may not have thought much about before. In the process, I hope you'll learn to become careful, sober, objective, but still enthusiastic and imaginative thinkers.

IV. Course Requirements

<u>Grade Distribution</u>	<u>Grading Scale</u>		
Attendance: 10%	A: 94-100	A-: 90-93	
Participation: 10%	B+: 87-89	B: 83-86	B-: 80-82
2 Papers: 20% each	C+: 77-79	C: 73-76	C-: 70-72
2 Exams: 20% each	D: 60-69	F: 0-59	

*Your grade depends upon satisfactory demonstration of the skills mentioned in the last section. Effort doesn't count. **There's no extra credit. Don't ask.**

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. I take attendance. Everyone gets **one** unexcused absence, no questions asked. Further absences will reduce your grade, directly detracting from your attendance and participation scores and indirectly detracting from the other parts of your grade. You are solely responsible for acquiring notes, handouts, etc. for days you are absent and should check with me to see if you missed any announcements.

Papers

You'll write two papers of about 1250 words each (4-5 double spaced pages). Topics will be distributed in advance of the due dates. A rough draft of paper 1 is required. I'll read it and suggest revisions. Drafts for paper 2 are optional but recommended. Late papers and late drafts will be penalized (5 pts/day for papers, 2 pts/day off paper 1 for draft 1). I won't accept drafts more than two days late and papers more than one week late. Failure to turn in a draft of paper 1 will incur a 5-point penalty off the paper's grade.

Reading

You won't do well unless you read. Reading should be the bulk of your work. Reading philosophy is difficult and time consuming. Read each piece carefully and preferably multiple times. Budget your time accordingly, paying particular attention to the length of each reading well before the day it must read. Unavoidably, some days will involve lots

PHIL 100 – Introduction to Philosophy: Problems

more reading than others. Take brief notes on each piece, identify the most important parts (for more reading), jot down questions and comments to bring up in class, etc.

Participation

Discussion is crucial to philosophy. Participation in class discussion is required. It's 10% of your grade – hence, there's no way you can get an A without talking. I expect you to come to class prepared to participate. To do this you must carefully read and think about the assigned readings. You also have to be prepared to think on your feet. You can ask questions and offer comments any time. This is more likely to generate independent thought and understanding – more than just lectures. I won't lecture much (though I have to lecture a bit and may have to temporarily limit discussion if we fall behind). I realize that speaking in class can be hard, but articulating your thoughts is an important skill this class is intended to help you develop. There's no way around it. If you find it difficult to talk, try to force yourself to talk (thinking up questions or comments in advance can help). **If you can't bring yourself to talk, you shouldn't take this class.** Failing to speak regularly will impact your grade. If you don't speak at all, you'll get a 0 for your participation score. I reserve the right to call on people – especially if they look scared, clueless, hung over, etc. If you behave disrespectfully or disruptively, things will get real. Also, **don't use your cell phone in class (not even under your desk in the back of the room – yes, I can see you).** **If you do, you may be mocked and/or pelted with erasers.**

Exams

You'll take two 100-point exams, each on a single unit. They'll consist of true/false, multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and essay questions.

V. Additional Policies

Academic Dishonesty

If you cheat or plagiarize, I'll catch you and you'll regret it. If you plagiarize or cheat on any assignment, no matter how seemingly insignificant, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Student Academic Services and to the Honor Council. Even if you plagiarize a paper draft, the incident will be reported.

Missed Exams

If an emergency (serious illness, injury, passing of a friend or family member) forces you to miss an exam or renders you unable to hand in an assignment on time, try to contact me beforehand (a short email is fine). We'll then schedule a make-up exam or agree on an extension deadline. Vacations, oversleeping, forgetfulness, hangovers, existential crises, etc. are not acceptable reasons (either individually or in combination). Plan accordingly.

PHIL 100 – Introduction to Philosophy: Problems

VI. Tentative Schedule

Readings marked ‘+’ will be posted on Moodle.

Page numbers for readings are from the 13th edition of *R&R* and the 1st edition of *Problems*.

Week 1 Philosophy Reason and Religion	– Start of Unit 1 – Existence of God 3/22 – Introduction 3/24 – Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief” (pp 101-105) Clark, “Without Evidence or Argument” (pp 114-19)
Week 2 The Ontological Argument The Design Argument	3/29 – Rachels, Section 2.5 (pp 24-28) Rowe, “The Ontological Argument” (pp 11-21) 3/31 – Rachels, Sections 2.2 and 2.3 (pp 11-22) Hume, “Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion” (pp 39-42, 49-51) +Swinburne, “The Argument From Design”
Week 3 The Problem of Evil	4/5 – ***Paper 1 drafts due*** Rachels, Chapter 3 (pp 29-40) Dostoevsky – “Rebellion” (pp 72-78) Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (pp 78-85) 4/7 – +Plantinga, “The Free Will Defense”
Week 4 Compatibilism Libertarianism	– Start of Unit 2 – Free Will 4/12 – Rachels, Chapter 9 (pp 117-132) Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity” (pp 414-19) Stace, “The Problem of Free Will” (pp 419-24) 4/14 – Chisholm, “Human Freedom and The Self” (pp 438-45)
Week 5 Hard Incompatibilism Dualism Qualia	4/19 – Pereboom, “Why We Have no Free Will...” (464-77) 4/21 – ***Paper 1 due*** – Start of Unit 3 – Mind Rachels, Chapter 6 (pp 69-86) Gertler, “A Defense of Mind-Body Dualism” (pp 285-97) Jackson, “The Qualia Problem” (pp 297-300) Paper 2 topics handed out
Week 6	4/26 – ***Exam 1*** (covers all material from Unit 2) 4/28 – Reading Day (no class)
Week 7 Identity Theory Eliminative Materialism Artificial Intelligence	5/3 – Carruthers, “The Mind is the Brain” (pp 301-9) 5/5 – Turing – “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (pp 321-29) Churchland – “Behaviorism, Materialism and Functionalism” (pp 309-21)
Week 8 Artificial Intelligence Functionalism Skepticism	5/10 – Rachels – Chapter 7 (pp 87-98) Lycan – “Robots and Minds” (pp 342-48) Searle – “Minds, Brains and Programs” (pp 330-42) – Start of Unit 4 – Knowledge 5/12 – **Last day to turn in drafts for paper 2 (to guarantee comments)** Unger – “An Argument for Skepticism” (pp 139-50) Moore – “Proof of an External World” (pp 216-19)
Week 9 Skepticism Idealism Analyzing Knowledge	5/17 – Rachels – Sections 10.1, 10.2 and “Idealism” from 10.3 (pp 133-141) Descartes – “Meditations 1 and 2” (pp 166-173) Chisholm – “The Problem of the Criterion” (pp 150-56) 5/19 – Berkeley – “Of the Principles of Human Knowledge” (pp 205-212) +Gettier – “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” +Plato – <i>Meno</i> (selection)
Week 10 The Problem of Induction Scientific Method	5/24 – Hume – “An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding” (pp 222-30) 5/26 – ***Paper 2 due*** Kitcher – “Believing Where We Cannot Prove” (268-77) 5/31 – ***Exam 2*** (covers Unit 4); 11:30 am