

PHIL 103: Introduction to Philosophy

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| Term: | Fall 2017 | Instructor: | Robert Smithson |
| Time: | MWF 10-10:50 | Email: | rsmithson@rollins.edu |
| Room: | SULLV HSE | Office: | French House, Room 104 |
| | | Office Hours: | W 9-10, F 11-12, and by appt. |

Course Description

Is there an external world? Do we have free will? What is the self? What is the nature of space and time? What is the relation between the mind and the physical world? Does God exist? How ought we to live? Does life have meaning? Philosophy is the study of these basic questions about the world and our place in it. In this introductory course, we will consider how philosophical arguments might be used to decide these questions.

Course Goals

1. To provide an overview of five fundamental areas of philosophical inquiry: *epistemology*, *action theory*, *metaphysics*, *ethics*, and *philosophy of mind*. We will approach these topics through the lens of a unifying theme: *objectivity and its limits*.
2. To develop students' philosophical writing and philosophical argumentation through a series of short writing assignments throughout the term.

Course Texts

All texts for the course will be posted to the course's Blackboard site.

Grading

Four writing assignments (3 pages each): 60%

Final: 30%

Participation/Unannounced quizzes: 10%

Papers

In light of the second listed goal for the course, there will be a series of writing assignments throughout the term, each 3-3.5 pages long (double-spaced). There will be a different prompt (or prompts) for each of the course's five units. Students are required to respond to four of those prompts. Students have the option of submitting papers for all five units; if five papers are submitted, the instructor will drop the lowest paper scores.

To facilitate anonymous grading, only include your identification number (and not your name) at the top of the document. For helpful advice on writing philosophy papers, see Jim Pryor's helpful introduction: www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html.

Participation

The participation grade takes into account both attendance and discussion in class. Class attendance is mandatory. Students arriving late will receive reduced credit for

attendance that day. Students leaving class early will also receive reduced credit.

The professor will accommodate a reasonable number of excused absences for religious holidays and official off-campus college business such as academic conference presentations and athletic competitions. However, per the College's policy on excused absences (http://www.rollins.edu/catalogue/academic_regulations.html#class-attendance), students must discuss with the professor the dates of the anticipated absences no later than the last day of the drop period. Students must present to their professor written evidence of the anticipated absences and discuss with him/her how and when make-up work should be completed prior to missing the class. Students should not expect to receive allowance for excused absences if they do not meet with the professor beforehand and clarify the dates as necessary.

Absences will be addressed by the professor in accordance with his attendance policy. The professor retains the right to determine what would be considered to be a reasonable number of absences (excused or otherwise) for the course. A student will not fail a course because the number of religious observances and/or college business absences exceed the number of absences allowed, except if excessive absences make it impossible to fulfill the expectations of the course. The student's class participation grade in the course, though, may still be affected.

Honor Code

Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. The student commitment to uphold the values of honor—honesty, trust, respect, fairness, and responsibility—particularly manifests itself in two public aspects of student life. First, as part of the admission process to the College, students agree to commit themselves to the Honor Code. Then, as part of the matriculation process during Orientation, students sign a more detailed pledge to uphold the Honor Code and to conduct themselves honorably in all their activities, both academic and social, as a Rollins student. A student signature on the following pledge is a binding commitment by the student that lasts for his or her entire tenure at Rollins College:

The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community. Therefore, I, a student of Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others.

This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to the paper, quiz, test, lab report, etc., the handwritten signed statement:

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work”

Material submitted electronically should contain the pledge; submission implies signing the pledge.

Credit Hour Statement for Rollins Courses

This course is a four-credit-hour course that meets three hours per week. The value of four credit hours results, in part, from work expected of enrolled students both inside and outside the classroom. Rollins faculty require that students average at least 2.5 hours of outside work for every hour of scheduled class time. In this course, the additional outside-of-class expectations include the careful study of (i) the assigned readings, (ii) the class handouts posted to Blackboard, and (iii) the student’s notes from lecture.

Accessibility Services

Rollins College is committed to equal access and inclusion for all students, faculty and staff. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 create a foundation of legal obligations to provide an accessible educational environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. It is the spirit of these laws which guides the college toward expanding access in all courses and programs, utilizing innovative instructional design, and identifying and removing barriers whenever possible.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to fully participate in your classes, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services, located on the first floor of the Olin Library, as soon as possible. You are encouraged to schedule a Welcome Meeting by filling out the “First Time Users” form on the website: <http://www.rollins.edu/accessibilityservices/> and/or reach out by phone or email: 407-975- 6463 or Access@Rollins.edu.

All test-taking accommodations requested for this course must first be approved through the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) and scheduled online through Accommodate **at least 72 hours before the exam**. Official accommodation letters must be received by and discussed with the faculty in advance. There will be no exceptions given unless previously approved by the OAS with documentation of the emergency situation. We highly recommend making all testing accommodations at the beginning of the semester. OAS staff are available to assist with this process.

Title IX Statement

Rollins College is committed to making its campus a safe place for students. If you tell any of your faculty about sexual misconduct involving members of the campus community, your professors are required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. Your faculty member can help connect you with the Coordinator, Oriana Jiménez (TitleIX@rollins.edu or 407-691-1773). She will provide you with information, resources and support. If you would prefer to speak to someone on campus confidentially, please call the Wellness Center at 407-628-6340. They are not required to report any information

you share with the Office of Title IX.

Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, stalking, intimate partner violence (such as dating or domestic abuse), sexual assault, and any discrimination based on your sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation that creates a hostile environment. For information, visit <http://www.rollins.edu/titleix/>.

Electronic Device Policy

In order to promote classroom discussion, no laptops, tablets, phones, etc. are permitted during class except by instructor permission.

In order to protect the integrity of the classroom experience, the use of recording devices is limited to either the expressed permission of the faculty member or with proper documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. Information about accommodations through Accessibility Services can be found at <http://www.rollins.edu/accessibility-services/>. Recording without the proper authorization is considered a violation of the Rollins Code of Community Standards.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, depending on the progress of the discussion in the class. If there are changes, I will make note of them in class and will send out an email about the changes. Next to each class period, there is an assigned reading. The reading for 9/1 should be completed before class on 9/1, etc.

| Date | Topic |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | UNIT 1: EPISTEMOLOGY |
| M 8/28 | <i>NO CLASS (Convocation)</i> |
| W 8/30 | Introduction, syllabus, external world skepticism. <i>Reading:</i> None. |
| F 9/1 | Heroic responses to skepticism. <i>Reading:</i> Keith DeRose (1999). Responding to Skepticism. Introduction to <i>Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader</i> , sections 1-3, 5, 7. Blackboard handout. |
| M 9/4 | <i>NO CLASS (Labor Day)</i> |
| W 9/6 | Concessive responses to skepticism. David Chalmers (2005). The Matrix as Metaphysics. In Grau (ed.). <i>Philosophers Explore the Matrix</i> . Sections 1-8. |
| F 9/8 | Skepticism and human life. Writing philosophy papers. <i>Reading:</i> Jim Pryor's introduction to writing philosophy papers (see above URL) Blackboard handout. |

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- M 9/11 Peer disagreement.
Reading: Catherine Elgin (2010). Persistent Disagreement.
Peter van Inwagen (2010). We're Right. They're Wrong.
Blackboard handout.
- W 9/13 Peer-disagreement, bias, and objectivity.
Reading: Richard Feldman (2012). Reasonable Religious Disagreements.
Blackboard handout.
- F 9/15 The problem of induction.
Reading: Blackboard handout.
- UNIT 2: ACTION THEORY & MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**
- M 9/18 Incompatibilism and moral responsibility.
Reading: Galen Strawson (1994). The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility.
Blackboard handout.
- W 9/20 Incompatibilism and moral responsibility. (continued)
Reading: Galen Strawson (1994). The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility.
Blackboard handout.
- F 9/22 Incompatibilism: the metaphysical background.
Reading: Blackboard handout.
Optional reading: Derk Pereboom (1995). Determinism Al Dente.
- M 9/25 Compatibilism: why does freedom matter?
Reading: Selections from the work of Frederick Douglass; George Moses Horton, "On Liberty and Slavery," Emma Lazerus, "The New Colossus," Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address." Blackboard handout.
- W 9/27 Compatibilism: why does freedom matter? (continued)
Reading: None
- F 9/29 Sanity and the deep self.
Reading: Susan Wolf (1987). Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility.
- UNIT 3: METAPHYSICS**
- M 10/2 Personal identity, a taxonomy, primitivist views.
Reading: John Perry (1978). *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Night 1). Blackboard handout.
- W 10/4 Brute physical views, psychological continuity views.
Reading: John Perry (1978). *A Dialogue* (Night 2). Blackboard handout.
- F 10/6 Psychological continuity views.
Reading: John Perry (1978). *A Dialogue* (Night 3). Blackboard handout.
- M 10/9 *FALL BREAK*
- W 10/11 Time travel, single timeline.
Reading: David Lewis (1976). The Paradoxes of Time Travel (read highlighted excerpts). Blackboard handout.

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- F 10/13 Time travel, single timeline. (continued)
Reading: Blackboard handout.
- Time travel, multiple timelines.
Reading: Peter van Inwagen (2010). Changing the Past. Blackboard handout. Blackboard handout.
- W 10/18 Time travel, multiple timelines. (continued)
Reading: Peter van Inwagen (2010). Changing the Past. Blackboard handout. Blackboard handout.
- F 10/20 Review day.
- UNIT 4: ETHICS**
- M 10/23 Utilitarianism.
Reading: Peter Singer (1972) Famine, Affluence, and Morality. Blackboard handout.
- W 10/25 Objections to utilitarianism.
Reading: Excerpts from J.J.C. Smart & Bernard Williams (1973) *Utilitarianism: For and Against*. Blackboard handout.
- F 10/27 Effective altruism.
Reading: Arnia Srinivasan (2015). "Stop the Robot Apocalypse." Blackboard handout.
- M 10/30 The problem of evil.
Reading: Dostoevsky (1993). *The Grand Inquisitor* (excerpts). Blackboard handout.
- W 11/1 Free will, greater good, and other responses.
Reading: Blackboard handout.
- F 11/3 Kantian value and the motive of duty
Reading: Blackboard handout.
- M 11/6 The absurd.
Reading: Thomas Nagel (1971). The Absurd. Blackboard handout.
- W 11/8 The meaning of life.
Reading: Susan Wolf (2007). The Meaning of Lives.
- F 11/10 Human persons.
Reading: McKibben (2003). *Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age* (excerpts). Blackboard handout.
- UNIT 5: MIND**
- M 11/13 Consciousness
Reading: David Chalmers (2010). Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness. Sections 1-5.
Thomas Nagel (1974). What is it like to be a bat?
Blackboard handout.

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| W 11/15 | The knowledge argument. <i>Reading:</i> Brie Gertler (2005). The Knowledge Argument. Blackboard handout. |
| F 11/17 | The knowledge argument (continued) <i>Reading:</i> Blackboard handout. |
| M 11/20 | The conceivability argument. <i>Reading:</i> Robert Kirk (2015). Zombies. In <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> , sections 1-3. Blackboard handout. |
| W 11/22 | THANKSGIVING BREAK |
| F 11/24 | THANKSGIVING BREAK |
| M 11/27 | The conceivability argument (continued). <i>Reading:</i> Blackboard handout. |
| W 11/29 | David Chalmers (1995). Facing Up to the Problem of Consciousness. Sections 6-8. Karen Bennett (2007). Mental Causation. Sections 1-5. |
| F 12/2 | TBD |
| | CODA |
| M 12/4 | Objectivity and its limits. <i>Reading:</i> None. |
| W 12/6 | What is philosophy? <i>Reading:</i> Bernard Williams (2008) Excerpts from <i>Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline</i> . |
| F 12/8 | Review session. |
| 12/11 2-4pm | FINAL |