Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 020 - 01

Instructor: Karen Rice (ker64@georgetown.edu)

Summer Pre-Session: May 20 – June 14, 2019
M-T-W-R-F 10:45-12:45
Maguire 101

Description

Our disagreements become bewildering and painful when we cannot even begin to understand how the other person is thinking about the problem. Philosophy provides us tools to uncover the assumptions that motivate profoundly different views. It gives us the opportunity to critically assess these views, realizing that we can think and perhaps be different than our unexamined presuppositions dictate. In this class, we examine the assumptions behind common views of everyday knowledge, scientific knowledge, the nature of the self, and free will. Among other questions we ask, What do you actually know? Can you trust scientific studies? Can your self survive trauma or death? and Are you responsible for your addictions?

Objectives

If students, professor, and an unruly world cooperate, by the end of the term, students will be able to do the following:

1) write clear, critical, and actionable analyses of complex issues;
2) produce polished visualizations that creatively and clearly present abstract information;
3) apply the epistemic and metaphysical concepts they have learned to other classes;
4) critically assess the assumptions that inform public debates about drug addiction, scientific reliability, credibility, and (re)forming the self.

Assessments

1. Daily quizzes: 15%
2. Participation: 10%
3. Four memos: 40% (800-1,000 words each)
4. Three “design translations”: 15%
5. Midterm and final exam: 15%

Materials

- All readings, podcasts, videos, and other sources will be available for free online
- Phones, tablets, and laptops are only permissible in class by prior arrangement with me; such permission may be rescinded if it becomes detrimental to the class environment

Franklin Car Collection, The New York Public Library. "Oiling diagram."
Attendance
Our class is small, and our term is short. Therefore, you will be granted only one absence. If you have medical or other documentation (e.g. from your dean), you may be able to receive more. Each absence after the first will result in a 3% deduction in your final grade. You must follow ALL absences within a week with an email summarizing the readings for the day and the class discussion you missed. Otherwise an additional 3% will be deducted, even if you had a documented excuse or it was your first absence. Arriving at class late repeatedly will also lower one’s final grade.

Participation
Excerpted from my colleague Hailey Huget’s Summer 2016 Introduction to Philosophy syllabus:
“Your participation grade is not an automatic ‘A.’ In order to do well on your participation grade, you must be an active and frequent contributor to discussion. If you are shy, nervous about public speaking, or worried for any other reason about your ability to participate in discussion, I encourage you to make an appointment with me or come to my office hours and we can talk about strategies to help you participate.

Good participation also involves helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment. Be mindful of how the topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class and treat your classmates with respect and courtesy. If you want to disagree with someone, or if you want to offer a criticism of their viewpoint, be sure to offer reasons for the approach that you are suggesting. Philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively, but we can do this only if each of us helps to create an atmosphere where we all learn from one another.”

Accommodations
If you have a disability that may affect your academic work and for which accommodations may be necessary, you should approach me within the first week of the course (or, in other circumstances, as soon as possible after accommodation becomes necessary) so that I can arrange for your needs to be met in this regard. You will also need to contact the Academic Resource Center, located in Leavey Center. For more information, see Georgetown’s Disability Support page.

Student Support
There are many resources on campus available to students for support throughout their time at Georgetown, covering physical and mental well-being. You can find a comprehensive brochure listing these resources here.

Instructional continuity
If campus is closed for any reason, be sure to check your email. I will be in touch with instructions on where to find materials for continuing class instruction. This may include additional readings, video or audio files, and/or writing assignments.

Email
Email is the primary authoritative means of communication for this class.

- Any requests (e.g. for an extension) must be submitted and responded to by email, even if you speak to me about them in person as well.
- I will hold you responsible to have read (and, if appropriate, taken action on) any email that I send more than 18 hours before the relevant class begins.
- I will respond to your emails within 72 hours.

Title IX
Please know that as a faculty member, I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, stalking, and sexual assault. However, university policy also requires me to report within 24 hours any disclosures you make to me about your experiences as a survivor of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University’s response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance. These resources may be found here.
Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by Georgetown’s Honor Code regarding all work for this course. Please note that you may culpably violate the Honor Code both intentionally and by accident or sloppiness. Thus, it is your responsibility to proactively insure that your work meets these standards; the Writing Center can be quite helpful on the finer points of careful citation. As my colleague puts it, “If you are feeling overwhelmed or circumstances prevent you from completing assignments to your standards, please email me ASAP to discuss alternatives” (Megan Dean, Fall 2018 Philosophy of Science syllabus).

I reserve the right to award a failing grade to any student found in violation of the honor code for cheating or plagiarism in this course.

The following is quoted from Mark Murphy’s Spring 2015 Political and Social Thought syllabus:

“General guidelines:
If it is a direct quotation, cite it.
If it is a paraphrase, cite it.
If it is an idea that you got from a particular source—whether a publication or a person—cite it.
If you are in doubt about whether it should be cited, cite it.

The only items that are not cited are those that one thought up on one’s own or those that belong to general knowledge.”

Contestation

An assessment appeal must be submitted in writing, reference the relevant rubric and provide specific examples from the assessed material, no sooner than two days and no later than ten days after receipt of the grade. Reconsideration may result in raising or lowering the grade initially assigned.

Late Assignments

Assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late. Any amount of time between 5 minutes and 23 hours and 59 minutes after the due time will count as a day. After one week, the assignment will receive an ‘F.’ Extensions must be requested before the due date and in writing. If the Canvas site’s submission platform is not working, you must screenshot the error message and send the assignment to me by email before the deadline for it to qualify as on time.

Grading standards

A: 94-100; remarkable, excellent
A-: 90-93; impressive, very good
B+: 87-89; meets expectations, good
B: 84-86; mostly meets expectations, solid
B-: 80-83; only meets some expectations, fair
C+: 77-79; significant issues, poor
Grades below a C+ trigger a mandatory check-in with the professor within 3 days of receiving the grade
C: 74-76; major problems, very poor
C-: 70-73; meets almost no expectations
D+ and below: failing

Spencer Collection, The New York Public Library. “Chordaria flagelliformis”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule is subject to change</th>
<th>Before class</th>
<th>In class</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M – 5/20</strong> Bullshit</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>T – 5/21</strong> Testimony and Objectivity</td>
<td>Alcoff – “Sotomayor’s Reasoning”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Visual representation of a key point of the material</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W – 5/22</strong> Epistemic injustice</td>
<td>Fricker, “Epistemic Injustice”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Memo 1: full draft (print and bring to class)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Th – 5/23</strong> Maintaining ignorance</td>
<td>Shotwell, “Racialized Common Sense”; Badger, “Whites Have Huge Wealth Edge Over Blacks (but Don’t Know It)”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Memo 1: submitted online</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F – 5/24</strong> Knowledge from Algorithms</td>
<td>O’Neill, “Arms Race: Going to College”; Brogan, “What’s the Deal with Algorithms?”</td>
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<td>Write a question about or objection to the material; be ready to reply to someone else’s</td>
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<td><strong>S – 5/26</strong></td>
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<td><strong>M – 5/27</strong> Classic problems of induction</td>
<td>Godfrey-Smith, Theory and Reality, Ch. 3</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Memo 2 + design translation: submitted</td>
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<td><strong>T – 5/28</strong> Inductive risk and values</td>
<td>Douglas – “Inductive Risk and Values in Science”</td>
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<td><strong>W – 5/29</strong> Accuracy vs. Simplification</td>
<td>Jahren, Lab Girl, selected chapters; Latour and Woolgar, Laboratory Life, excerpts</td>
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<td>Annotate a visual representation of the scientific method or create a new one</td>
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<td><strong>Th – 5/30</strong> Diversity in science</td>
<td>Guterl, “Diversity in Science: Why It is Essential for Excellence”; Prescod-Weinstein, “Scientists Must Challenge What Makes Studies Scientific”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Write a question about or objection to the material; be ready to reply to someone else’s</td>
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<td><strong>F – 5/31</strong> Patients and/as scientists</td>
<td>Shotwell, “Epistemic Injustice and Illness”; Kidd and Carel, “Epistemic Injustice and Illness”</td>
<td>Write critical response</td>
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<td><strong>S – 6/2</strong> Metaphysics of the Self: Is that you?</td>
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<td>M – 6/3</td>
<td>Dualism</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>T – 6/4</td>
<td>Constructing the self through knowledge</td>
<td>McWhorter, <em>Bodies and Pleasures</em>, Ch. 5; Hacking, “Making Up People”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>W – 6/5</td>
<td>Destruction of the self: Death</td>
<td>Hi-Phi Nation, “The Self and Survival”</td>
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<td>F – 6/7</td>
<td>Changing selves</td>
<td>Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”; Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception”</td>
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<td>S – 6/9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Memo 3 + design translation: submitted</td>
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<td>W – 6/12</td>
<td>Microaggressions and conscious control</td>
<td>Liebow, “What are Microaggressions? A Conceptual Analysis” and “Responsibility, Control, and Awareness”</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
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<td>F – 6/14</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<td>M – 6/24</td>
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<td>Memo 4 + design translation: submitted</td>
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