

Introduction to Philosophy (Phil 020-20)

Summer 2019 – Georgetown University
1:00-3:00PM MTWR
Maguire 101

Course Instructor: Quentin Fisher
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Office Hours: TBA (or by appt.)

Course Description

Human beings are peculiar animals. We can think, act, love, and speak, but we can also think about the meaning of our actions, commitments, thoughts, and words. We are, in other words, essentially reflective or – better – philosophical animals. In this course we will investigate some of the core questions in theoretical philosophy: What is a mind? What or who am I? Is objective knowledge possible? Can intelligence be “artificial”? What – if anything – has value? We will look at both historical and contemporary treatments of these questions. Along the way we will work to develop a set of analytical tools useful for investigating theoretical questions, both philosophical and otherwise.

Required Texts

Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* Oxford University Press

Graham Priest, *Logic: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

All other readings will be available for free download on the Canvas site.

Assessment¹

2 Papers (Each worth 25% of your grade)
Daily Reading Responses (25%)
Participation/Preparedness (25%)

Papers:

You must write two 5-7 page papers. In the first paper, you must explain in detail, using tools from formal logic, an argument that was discussed in class or in the readings. You must then offer one criticism of this argument. In the second paper, you will choose any topic discussed over the course of the term and offer (i) an analytical reconstruction of an argument relevant to that topic, (ii) a criticism of that argument, and (iii) a rejoinder to the argument in (ii). All paper topics must be approved by course instructor. More information to

¹ The instructor reserves the right to revise the nature of the assignments throughout the course.

come in class.

Reading Responses

Before *each class meeting*, you must email me a reading response. This response can be an observation about the reading, a question you have, or a worry/ objection you want to raise. Your response should be a **maximum of four sentences and must be emailed by 10:00AM the morning before class and on the reading for that class.** Anything received after 10:00AM will not receive credit.

Participation

Since this is a *discussion* based course, participation and preparedness make up 25% of your grade. I expect you to come prepared having done the reading(s) and ready to engage in discussion about the material. Participation does not necessarily mean speaking as frequently as you can. While I will not be evaluating you on the content of your comments, I will be looking for thoughtful contributions that demonstrate a serious attempt to think about the ideas under discussion. I also expect you to be respectful and courteous toward both your peers and me in class. Not only is this important for creating a welcoming environment, but it is *essential* for doing good philosophy. Engaging charitably, even with ideas with which you strongly disagree, is a central philosophical and intellectual virtue. If you are worried for any reason about your ability to participate, please talk to me. I am very sympathetic to concerns of this kind, and I am happy to find ways to accommodate many different learning styles.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Please do not be late. We will begin class at 1:00PM sharp. You are given two excused absences, no questions asked. If you are late to class more than 3 times, it will affect your participation grade. Each unexcused absence after 2 absences will lower your participation grade by one whole grade – e.g., from an ‘A’ to a ‘B’.

Academic Integrity

Students found to be in violation with the Georgetown University honor code will be reported to the Honor Council and will receive a failing grade on the assignment, or in the course, or worse, depending on the severity of the infraction. We will discuss in class proper citation conventions in philosophy.

Course Schedule²

² Schedule subject to change

Introduction	Maze of Free Will
Warmup with Plato	Phaedo (selections)
Where am I?	Daniel Dennett, “Where am I?”
What is the mind?	Jaegwon Kim, “Introduction,” <i>Philosophy of Mind</i> pp. 1-30
The Modern Mind: A Saga	John Haugeland, pp. 15-45
Social Construction?	Ian Hacking, “Making Up People”
The Unconscious	Jonathan Lear, “Freud: Interpreting the Unconscious” + Larissa MacFarquhar, “The Mind Expanding Ideas of Andy Clark”
Logical Interlude: Validity, Truth Functions, Quantifiers	Priest, <i>Logic: A Very Short Introduction</i> , pp. 1-23
What can I know?	Linda Zagzebsky “Epistemic Value and What We Care About”
Case Study 1: Epistemology and the Internet	Michael Lynch, pp. xi-40 “Our digital form of life” + “Google Knowing”
Is the Internet Making us Less Reasonable?	Michael Lynch, pp. 41-86 “Fragmented Reasons” + “Truth, Lies, and Social Media”
Echo Chambers	Thi Nguyen, “Escape the Echo Chamber”
Case Study 2: White Ignorance	Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”
Case Study 3: Pharmaceuticals & Biomedical Research	Justin Biddle, “Lessons from the Vioxx Debacle”
Case Study 4: The Logic of Misogyny	Kate Manne, Ch. 1 “Threatening Women”
Misogyny Continued	Kate Manne, Ch. 2 “Ameliorating Misogyny”
Misogyny Continued	Kate Manne, Ch. 3 “Discriminating Sexism”
What does it all mean?	Dreyfus and Kelly, “Our Contemporary Nihilism” + Nietzsche (excerpts)
Wrap Up	TBD