

PHIL-020-10: Introduction to Philosophy (Georgetown University, Summer 2023)

Instructor: Philipp Kremers [pk691@georgetown.edu]

Time and Location: Monday + Tuesday + Wednesday + Thursday [5:50–7:55 pm @ Reiss 152]

Course Description:

This course will provide a survey of classic and contemporary issues in *philosophy*, i.e., we will study “how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term” (Wilfrid Sellars). More specifically, in this course, we will address the following four fundamental questions that have traditionally been associated with the discipline of philosophy: (1) What can I know? (2) What ought I do? (3) What may I hope? (4) What is man?

Office Hours:

My office hours are every Monday from 2–3 pm at the philosophy department computer lab (New North 216). You can book an appointment at https://calendly.com/philipp_kremers/office-hours. If you are busy at that time, just drop me an email and we will find a different time that works for you. Sometimes students feel uncomfortable requesting a meeting, but please do not hesitate to do so.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

The breakdown of grades will be as follows:

Participation: 10 %

Discussion Board Posts: 30 %

Mid-Term Paper: 30 %

Final Paper: 30 %

Participation: The participation grade will be based on your attendance, preparation, and contributions to class discussion (as well as discussions in office hours). You are allowed up to two unexcused absences throughout the term without penalty. Every additional unexcused absence will automatically lower your final grade by one step (e.g., from an A- to a B+). If you know in advance that you have to miss class, you need to communicate with me ahead of time.

Discussion Board Posts: You are supposed to submit two short discussion board posts per unit that engage with the assigned material (i.e., two posts on unit A from June 6–13, two posts on unit B from June 14–26, and two posts on unit C from June 27–July 5). These discussion board posts will serve as the basis for discussion in class. So, you have to engage with the material even though we have not yet discussed it in class yet. You can choose freely on which two days you would like to submit your posts. However, the discussion board posts have to be submitted by 3:30 pm on the day that we will discuss the respective material in class. If they are submitted later than that, they will not be counted.

You will be given full credit for your posts as long as you show evidence of engagement with the philosophical issues. This means that you should not just summarize the arguments in the materia; you should explain why you think an argument is interesting, wrong, worth pursuing, or relevant to another issue that you are concerned with. There is no length requirement. Yet, to make sure that you engage with the philosophical issues in a substantive way, you should aim for a length of at least 100 words.

Mid-Term Paper and Final Paper: You are supposed to submit a mid-term paper by June 18 and a final paper by the last day of class, i.e., by July 6. Both papers should be around 800 words long. I will circulate a couple of prompts in advance. However, you can also write on any issue that we have addressed in class up to that point. If you chose the latter option, you must clear your topic with me beforehand. ‘B+’ papers will (1) clearly articulate the general claims that are being defended, (2) be relatively well-organized, (3) will rely on fairly strong evidence and arguments, and (4) will be stylistically clear. ‘A’ grades will be awarded to papers that excel in every category, thereby exhibiting a clear capacity for doing philosophy. ‘A-’ grades will be awarded to papers that excel in one of these areas. ‘B’ grades will be awarded to papers that are weaker in one area – but still satisfactory. ‘C’ grades will be awarded to papers that are weak in two or more of these categories; and ‘D’ grades will only be awarded to papers that are weak in all categories (e.g., by lacking a thesis or lacking arguments for a thesis).

Course Policies:

Materials: All required materials will be provided electronically. You do not need to buy any books for this course.

Extensions: If you need an extension on a paper, please ask *before* the due date. In general, I am willing to give a 24-hour grace period (no questions asked). However, beyond this grace period, your grade for the paper will be lowered by one step (e.g., from an A- to a B+) for each day it is late (unless an extension is granted in advance).

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be familiar with Georgetown University’s Honor Code and to conduct yourself accordingly. All submitted essays will be automatically scanned for plagiarism. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council for investigation. If the Honor Council confirms that a violation of the Honor Code took place, you will receive an ‘F’ grade for the course (not just the assignment).

Electronic Devices: You are welcome to use your computer for note taking and other purposes that are consistent with the tasks at hand in the course (e.g., looking up quotes from the reading); however, I would appreciate it if you would have the maturity to refrain from using your computer for other purposes (e.g., playing games or checking your email) while in the class. Using your computer for other purposes in the classroom can distract others and create an environment in which it is difficult for others to learn; so please respect one another.

Disabilities Statement: If you are on record with the university as requiring special accommodations, get in touch with me and let me know in confidence within the first two weeks of the semester. If you

find, during the course of the semester, that special accommodations are required, please bring me the relevant documentation from the university as soon as you acquire it.

Title IX Syllabus Statement: Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#). If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include: a) Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: sarp@georgetown.edu and b) Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): (202) 687-6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments: Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments and modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need. SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](#) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process. More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).

Tentative Schedule:

(Version from 03/13/2023)

Date	Mandatory Readings
June 5 (Monday)	<u>Kant</u> , Immanuel (1992 [1800]): <i>Lectures on Logic</i> [selections], trans. by J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 535–539 [5 pages] [i.e., Part III of the Introduction of Kant’s <i>Jäsche Logic</i>].
UNIT A: Kant’s First Question: What Can I Know?	
June 6 (Tuesday)	<u>Nguyen</u> , C. Thi (2018): “Escape the Echo Chamber,” <i>Aeon</i> [available online: https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult].
June 7 (Wednesday)	<u>Simon</u> , Herbert A. (1997 [1988]): “Managing in an Information-Rich World,” in <i>Models of Bounded Rationality: Volume 3</i> (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press): 173–182 [9 pages].
June 8 (Thursday)	<u>Winsberg</u> , Eric (2022): <i>Moral Models: Crucial Decisions in the Age of Computer Simulation</i> (24 minutes) [available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cgCTK17ics].
June 12 (Monday)	<u>Bostrom</u> , Nick (2003): “Are We Living in a Computer Simulation?,” <i>The Philosophical Quarterly</i> 53 (211): 243–255 [13 pages].
June 13 (Tuesday)	<u>Craig</u> , Edward (1990): <i>Knowledge and the State of Nature</i> [selections] (Oxford: Clarendon Press): 1–4 and 11–14 [8 pages].
UNIT B: Kant’s Second Question: What Ought I Do?	
June 14 (Wednesday)	<u>Mackie</u> , J. L. (2013 [1977]): “The Subjectivity of Values,” in <i>Ethical Theory: An Anthology</i> , ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau (Malden, MA / Oxford / Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell): 22–30 [9 pages] [i.e., an excerpt from Mackie’s <i>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</i>].
June 15 (Thursday)	<u>Appiah</u> , Kwame Anthony (2016): “There Is No Such Thing as Western Civilisation,” <i>The Guardian</i> Issue from November 9, 2016 [available online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/09/western-civilisation-appiah-reith-lecture].
June 18 (Sunday)	<u>MID-TERM PAPER DUE</u>
June 19 (Monday)	<u>NO CLASS</u> [Juneteenth]

June 20 (Tuesday)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>von Humboldt</u>, Wilhelm (1969 [1792]): <i>The Limits of State Action</i> [selections], trans. by J. W. Burrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 16–21 [i.e., only chapter II ‘Of the Individual Man and the Highest Ends of His Existence’] [6 pages]. 2) <u>Handout on the Moral Philosophy of Immanuel Kant</u> [will be distributed in advance].
June 21 (Wednesday)	<u>MacAskill</u> , William (2015): <i>Doing Good Better</i> [selections] (New York, NY: Penguin Random House): 1–14 and 29–42 [25 pages] [i.e., Introduction and chapter 2]. [This seems like a lot but this text was written for a public audience and is very easy to read.]
June 22 (Thursday)	<u>Srinivasan</u> , Amia (2015): “Stop the Robot Apocalypse,” in <i>London Review of Books</i> [available online: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v37/n18/amia-srinivasan/stop-the-robot-apocalypse].
June 26 (Monday)	<u>Young</u> , Iris Marion (2003) “From Guilt to Solidarity: Sweatshops and Political Responsibility,” <i>Dissent</i> 50 (2): 39–44 [6 pages].
UNIT C: Third Kantian Question: What May I Hope For?	
June 27 (Tuesday)	<u>Manson</u> , Neil A. (2009): “The Fine-Tuning Argument,” <i>Philosophy Compass</i> 4 (1): 271–286 [14 pages].
June 28 (Wednesday)	<u>Hume</u> , David (2007 [1779]): “The Argument from Evil,” in <i>Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology</i> , ed. by Louis P. Pojman and Michael Rea (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth): 147–152 [6 pages] [i.e., selections from Hume’s <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i>].
June 29 (Thursday)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Upanishads</u> (2010 [~500 BC]): “Atman is Brahman,” in <i>Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings</i>, ed. by Michael L. Peterson (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 160–162 [3 pages] [i.e., an excerpt from the <i>Chandogya Upanishad</i>]. 2) <u>Merali</u>, Zeeya (2018): “How Cosmic is the Cosmos?,” in <i>Aeon</i> [available online: https://aeon.co/essays/can-buddhist-philosophy-explain-what-came-before-the-big-bang].
July 3 (Monday)	<u>Wolens</u> , Doug (2012): <i>The Singularity</i> [Movie] [75 minutes].
July 4 (Tuesday)	<u>NO CLASS</u> [Independence Day]
July 5 (Wednesday)	<u>Littlefair</u> , Sam (2018): “Do You Only Live Once?,” <i>Lion’s Roar</i> [available online: https://www.lionsroar.com/do-you-only-live-once/].

WRAP-UP: What is Philosophy?

July 6 (Thursday)

Excerpts on the Concept of Philosophy [will be distributed in advance].FINAL PAPER DUE

July 10 (Monday)

FINAL GRADES DUE