

Phil 101 (C) - Introduction to Philosophical Problems

Colgate University

202 Hascall

David Miguel Gray

Office: 109 Hascall

<http://www.colgate.edu/facultysearch/FacultyDirectory/david-gray>

Spring 2014

MWF 12:20-1:10

dgray@colgate.edu

Office Hours: W 4:10-6:00; F 1:10-2:00

Synopsis

This course is about *us*. It is a course about what we know, how we know it, what we are, and why it matters. More precisely, this is a course about human nature. What is it to have a mind? How do we make sense of our mental lives in a physical world? Is the mind just the brain? What makes us who we are? How can we be the same person at age 80 that we were at age 8 given that we have different minds and are made up of different physical material? Do our experiences shape who we are, or how we react to those experiences? What does it mean to be free? Are we free? Does being free also make us responsible for our actions? What does it mean to live a meaningful life? Through the study of contemporary philosophical essays, fiction, and movies, we will investigate these issues, and come to appreciate that refining a question is just as valuable as trying to answer it.

Goals

The primary goal of this course is to improve your skills of philosophical argumentation, reading, and writing. This will be achieved through the secondary goal of grappling with some central issues in epistemology (knowledge and skepticism), philosophy of mind (mind-body problem, intelligence, and consciousness), metaphysics (identity and free will), and, time permitting, the meaning of life.

Materials:

Books:

Perry, J., M. Bratman, and J. Fischer. 2012. *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. 5th or 6th Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Hereafter, ITP
Hofstadter, D. and D. Dennett. 1981. *The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self and Soul*. New York: Basic Books. (Optional)

Movies & Television Episodes:

Some of these are required for the course some are optional. All required viewing are available on Amazon Instant Video at a very affordable rental price (feel free to meetup with classmates

to watch videos together). Some of the videos are not available for rental through Amazon but may be available through Netflix or are available for purchase at Amazon.

Reserves

The books, all the required movies, and most of the optional movies for this course have also been placed on reserve at the main library (although see below for fairly inexpensive ways to access most of these movies). They are available at the circulation desk.

Evaluation

Participation – 25%

Arguments and Quizzes – 15%

Midterm Exam – 10%

Two 3-4 page papers – 30% (weighted evenly)

Final Exam – 20%

Grading will be on a 100 point scale. Here are the letter conversions.

	A 93.00–100	A– 90.00–92.99
B+ 87.00–89.99	B 83.00–86.99	B– 80.00–82.99
C+ 77.00–79.99	C 73.00–76.99	C– 70.00–72.99
D+ 67.00–69.99	D 63.00–66.99	D– 60.00–62.99
F 0.00–59.99		

Participation

Participation will be determined by attendance, preparedness (having read the assigned readings before class and coming to class with questions), and discussion. Part of learning philosophy is to learn how to engage in argumentation (and not just exchange opinions) with others, so being informed on the matters we are discussing and *practicing* verbal argumentation is essential to learning philosophy.

If you miss a class you should always contact a classmate to see what you missed and what the next assignment is. You should not plan on missing more than 3 classes (excused or otherwise).

Arguments

These 6 assignments involve extracting an argument from a reading, organizing it into its most natural logical progression, and noting any hidden assumptions. Being able to find and reconstruct the arguments you read is not only essential to properly understanding the reading, but will make up a portion of any paper you will write in philosophy. Honing this skill takes a lot of practice, so these short assignments will allow you to develop this skill much more quickly than would be possible by just asking you to do these in your paper

assignments.

These assignments also serve a secondary purpose which is to improve class discussion. As such, it is extremely important that argument assignments be turned in typed (no handwritten assignments will be accepted) at the beginning of class for which they are due. No late arguments will be accepted without a written excuse from health services. If you are away for a sporting event, make sure to email me your argument by the beginning of class time that you are missing.

You should not consult any outside sources for these exercises as that defeats the purpose of the assignment. If you discuss these assignments with anyone, it should be your fellow classmates and not upperclassmen (in my speak, anyone or any material outside of our class and reading assignments constitute ‘outside sources’). If you develop your argument in conversation with classmates, make sure to cite them on your argument (just a footnote thanking them for helpful discussion).

Readings marked with ‘*’ require completing an argument assignment. We’ll do a few of these in class before you have to turn one in. Arguments are due at the beginning of class on the day we are to discuss the given reading. With the exception of the first argument assignment on Moore (which will be not be graded), these assignments are graded with a check plus (100), check (85), check minus (75) or an F (0).

Quizzes

Throughout the semester there will be 5 quizzes. The first quiz will cover material in the section of the course titled “Argumentation and Logic” as well as this syllabus! The other 4 quizzes will be unannounced and given throughout the course of the semester. These quizzes will be quite simple and will test the assigned reading for the day on which they are administered.

3-4 Page Papers

These papers will give you a chance to further practice argumentation both by covering arguments for essays you have read and, more importantly, by giving you a chance to develop your own arguments (in my opinion, this is the most rewarding part of philosophy). Papers should aim to clearly explain the material you are writing about as well as providing a thesis that is supported by original argumentation. By ‘Original’ I don’t mean to suggest that no one has ever made that argument, just that you come up with the argument independently of what you have read by other philosophers. Original argumentation will be evaluated in terms of its existence (is there any?) and plausibility (how well does it stand up to criticism?). I encourage you to take risks within reason. Don’t think you can come up with a new theory of free will in 3-4 pages, but do try to critique arguments, and propose solutions to smaller problems. (I take grading papers to be something like scoring diving: both the difficulty of the project and the quality of the execution are taken into account). You are both welcome

and encouraged to come to me to talk about your paper. While I do not read drafts, I am happy to help you test out arguments, structure your ideas, your papers, and introductions.

- The papers are due Wednesday February 12th Wednesday April 2nd by 5pm in my office or my mailbox in 113 Hascall.

For additional writing help, you are encouraged to make use of **Colgate's Writing and Speaking Center** in 208 Lathrop Hall. Appointments can be set up through their website: <http://www.colgate.edu/centers-and-institutes/writing-and-speaking-center>

Midterm and Final Exam

A midterm and a final exam serve the purpose of giving you a chance to go over material we have previously covered and improve your understanding both of the individual readings and how they relate to one another. Keeping up with the readings and taking notes both before and after classes on the topics we discuss will greatly minimize preparation for these exams. Exam questions will take the form of short essays, multiple choice, true/false, and identification of concepts and philosophers.

- The midterm exam will be on Wednesday March 5th in class.
- The final exam will be held on Friday May 9th, 12-2 pm.

Unpleasant Miscellany

Late Policy

A third of a letter grade will be removed for every 24 hour period that the paper is late. After 5 days, no late paper will be accepted (this includes weekends). Extensions for medical reasons will only be granted with written notice from Health Services. If you need to miss class or need an extension for religious reasons please let me know well in advance.

Laptops and Phones

Laptops are not permitted in class. Cell phone use is also not permitted (this includes reading and sending texts). Please turn your cell phone off before class. Cell phone usage in class will result in participation grade reductions.

There is emerging some excellent data suggesting that students who multi-task do significantly worse (statistically speaking) than those who don't. Another recent study shows that 'heavy' multi-taskers are actually (1) worse at switching between tasks and (2) more prone to distraction than those who don't multi-task. In short, we all think we're pretty good at multi-tasking but we really aren't.

And of course, there is a respect issue. I'll never start texting or Facebooking while you are talking or asking questions, so I expect you to do the same for your classmates and myself. And while I am fascinating, I'm probably not more fascinating than Facebook *all* the time, so I could do without the competition.

Plagiarism

For tips on avoiding plagiarism, see:

<http://www.colgate.edu/offices-and-services/deanofthecollege/academichonorcode/theacademichonorcode/citingsourcesavoidingplagiarism>

You are responsible for reading this guide to plagiarism and knowing what it is. If you are unclear as to what may or may not constitute plagiarism you should also come see me. Plagiarism of any sort is not tolerated and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported. Plagiarism of any assignment will always result in failure of that assignment and potentially failure in the course. Always cite sources in your papers even if you paraphrase them. Also cite conversations from which you borrow from (e.g. if you discuss something with a friend and they give you an idea that you end up using in your paper). Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse, so inform yourself!

Argument Assignments

For argument assignments, absolutely no sources (including online blogs or encyclopedias) should be consulted. The point of these assignments is for you to formulate what you take to be the argument in the assignment without the help of books, articles, online sources, or former students. You can work with other classmates; however, if you do, be sure to mention this in a footnote to your argument assignment. Additionally, make sure you write down your arguments independently of one another (such that your argument assignments might look similar in terms of structure, but not identical). If you choose to work in groups, all members of the group must cite other members of the group for it not to count as plagiarism.

Consumption

I don't mean pulmonary tuberculosis, but rather food and beverages. Feel free to bring coffee, water, or other things that keep you hydrated and alert (within the realm of the legal of course). I understand that *occasionally* you might need to bring some food to class but please make sure it isn't food that makes noise when eaten.

Cancelled Class

There will be no class or office hours on Friday, February 7th as I will be speaking at a conference that day.

Citations

For citations, use the Chicago Author-Date system. This is a very nice and clean form of citation. You can find a summary of its rules under "References" (2/3 rds down the page) at:

http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/analys/for_authors/

For a more detailed account of Chicago style, see:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/15/ch16/ch16_toc.html

You may use either footnote or in-text citation, but don't use endnotes.

Office Hours

You are highly encouraged to come to office hours to discuss anything. I'd also encourage you to drop by early in the semester for a quick chat. You are especially encouraged to come to office hours if you have missed a class, are having problems with the course material (some of which is very difficult), or working on a paper. If you absolutely cannot make office hours because of class conflicts, I am also available for office hours by appointment but I request that you give me at least 24 hours notice for this.

Schedule

Below is the schedule for the semester. I don't assign particular dates to each reading because I prefer to let our conversation dictate the pace at which we proceed. Because of this, attendance at class is very important for you to know what we are going to do in the next class. Nevertheless, by Friday of each week I'll post the schedule for the upcoming week.

Introduction

- ⊕ Perry, J., M. Bratman, and J. Fischer. 2010. "Introduction: On the Study of Philosophy". in ITP, 3-8.
- ⊕ Russell, B. 1969. "The Value of Philosophy" from *The Problems of Philosophy*. in ITP, 18-21.

Part I: Argumentation and Knowledge (*approximately 3 weeks*)

Argumentation and Logic



Monty Python's The Argument Clinic (in class)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQFKtI6gn9Y>

- ⊕ Perry, J., M. Bratman, and J. Fischer. 2010. "Logical Toolkit". in ITP, 9-14
- ⊕ Gray, D. "Sentential Logic for Reading Knowledge"

Knowledge: What is it?

- Φ Ayer, A.J. 1956. “Knowing as Having the Right to Be Sure” in *The Problem of Knowledge*. London: Macmillan.
- Φ Gettier, E. 1963. “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” *Analysis* 23. in ITP, 133-135.
In class argument practice

Skepticism: What can we Know?

- Φ* Moore, G.E., 1953. Excerpt from “Sense Data” in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, 28-33 only. Focus on 32-33.
In class argument practice
- Φ* Descartes, R. 1641. Excerpt from *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditation I, 136-138. (Restrict Argument assignment to argument for dreaming only)
-  Wachowski A. & L. Wachowski 1999. *The Matrix*. Warner Bros.
<http://www.amazon.com/The-Matrix/dp/B000HAB4KS/>
- Φ* Putnam, H. *Reason Truth and History* Chp. 1 “Brains in a Vat”.
- Φ Perry, J., M. Bratman, and J. Fischer. 2010. “Writing Philosophy Papers”. in ITP, 15-17.
- Φ Gray, D “Writing and Reading Philosophy”.

Part II: The Mind (*approximately 3 weeks*)

Mind-Body Problem

- Φ Descartes, R. 1641. Excerpt from *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditations II & VI, in ITP and “Letter from Elizabeth”, “Letters to Elizabeth” 21/5/1643.

Intelligence

-  Scott, R. 2007. *Blade Runner* (Final Cut Version). USA. Warner Bros.
<http://www.amazon.com/Blade-Runner-The-Final-Cut/dp/B0012PDVQ2/>

Talk to ELIZA here: http://www-ai.ijs.si/eliza-cgi-bin/eliza_script

- ☉ Turing, A.M. 1950. “Computing, Machinery and Intelligence” *Mind* 59, No. 236. in ITP. 285-297.

Read about the 2012 Loebner Prize Winner here: <http://www.i-programmer.info/news/105-artificial-intelligence/4230-loebner-prize-judges-could-easily-identify-chatbots-.html>

Materialism and the Mental

- ☉ Ryle, G. 1949. “Descartes’s Myth” from *Concept of Mind*. In ITP, 250-257.
- ☉ Smart, J.J.C. 1959. “Sensations as Brain Processes” *Philosophical Review*. 68: 141-56.
-  Hofstadter, D. “Ant Fugue” from *Godel, Escher, Bach*. in *The Mind’s I*. 159-191.

Functionalism

- ☉ Putnam, H. 1975. “The Nature of Mental States” in *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2*. 429-440.
- ☉ Block, N. “Troubles with Functionalism” (Excerpt).
- ☉ Searle, J. 1980. “Minds, Brains, and Programs” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. in ITP, 298-310.

Consciousness: Trouble for Materialism?

- ☉* Jackson, F. 1986. “What Mary Didn’t Know”. *The Journal of Philosophy*, LXXXIII, No. 5.
- ☉ Levin, J., 1986, “Could Love Be Like a Heat Wave?: Physicalism and the Subjective Character of Experience”, *Philosophical Studies*. 49: 245–261.

Part III: Personal Identity (*approximately 2 ½ weeks*)

What is it to be Identical?

- ☉ Black, M. 1952. “The Identity of Indiscernibles,” *Mind*, 51:242. 153-164.

Personal Identity

- ☉ Dennett, D. 1978. "Where Am I?" in *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*. in ITP, 368-76.

And/Or



"Where Am I?" Part I http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_8yo5hacKM



"Where Am I?" Part II <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh3Ld4OdXCQ>



Nolan C. 2000. *Memento*. USA. Helkon.
<http://www.amazon.com/Memento/dp/B004YRSBTW/>

- ☉ Locke, J. *Essays* II.xxvii.9-29.



Nolan, C. 2006 *The Prestige*. USA. Touchstone.
<http://www.amazon.com/Prestige-Blu-ray-Christian-Bale/dp/B003QS9WIE/>

- ☉ Perry, J. 1978. *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. in ITP 312-332.

- ☉ Parfit, D. 1971. "Personal Identity" *The Philosophical Review* 80:1. In ITP, 343-55.

Part IV: Social, and Racial Identity (approximately 1 ½ weeks)

Social Identity?

- ☉ Hacking, I. 1986. "Making Up People." in *Reconstructing Individualism*. T. Heller, M. Sosna, and D. Wellbery Eds. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 222-236.
- ☉ DuBois, W.E.B. 1897. *Souls of Black Folks*. Chp. 1 Of Our Spiritual Strivings. (First 4 paragraphs).
- ☉ Mills, C. 1998. What are you really? in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca: Cornell. 41-66.

Part V: Free Will and the Meaning of Life (*approximately 3weeks*)

The Debate...

- ☉* Van Inwagen, P. “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will”. in ITP, 385-396.

Time Travel



Gilliam, T. 1996. *12 Monkeys*. USA. Universal Studios.
<http://www.amazon.com/12-Monkeys/dp/B000ICXQF6/>



Cuarón, A. 2004. *H.P. and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. UK. Warner Bros.
<http://www.amazon.com/Harry-Potter-Prisoner-Azkaban/dp/B00271DNP4/>

Compatibilisms

- ☉ Hume, D. 1748. Of Liberty and Necessity, in ITP 397-406.
- ☉* Frankfurt, H. 1969. “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” in ITP, 407-13.
- ☉ Frankfurt, H. “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” in ITP 430-439.

Responsibility

- ☉ Nagel, T. 1976. “Moral Luck,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supp. 50: 137-155. Reprinted in *Free Will*. 1st Ed. Ed. Gary Watson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. In ITP 440-448.

The Meaning of Life



Ramis, H. 1993. *Groundhog Day*. USA. Columbia Pictures.



Nagel, T. 1979. “The Absurd” in ITP, 755-762.



Camus, A. 1955. “The Myth of Sisyphus.” in ITP, 762-764.



Taylor, R. 1981. “The Meaning of Human Existence.” in ITP, 765-781 (skip 769-774, start at “The Concept of Meaning”).

Ethics and its Applications (Time Permitting)

- ⊕ Bentham, J. 1822. “The Principle of Utility” in ITP, 457-459.
- ⊕ Singer, P. 1972. “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” in ITP 495-503.
- ⊕ O’Neill, O. 1980. “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems” in ITP 538-544.