

Syllabus

Problems in Philosophy

PHIL 120 | Fall 2018
Washington University in St. Louis

Instructor:	Nic Kozirolek
Email:	nkozirolek@wustl.edu
Office:	101 Wilson Hall
Office Hours:	TR 10:30–11:30am, and by appointment

Class Meetings:	TR 8:30–10:00am, Psychology 249
	TR 4:00–5:30pm, Mallinckrodt 305

Required Text:	<i>First Philosophy: Knowing and Being</i> , Second Edition, edited by Andrew Bailey, with Robert M. Martin, (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2013)
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Assignments:	Attendance/Participation (10% of final grade) Essays (three, 30% each)
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1 Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy; as such, it's designed to be accessible to students with no prior philosophical knowledge or training. But that doesn't mean it will be easy. Our focus will be on a number of central philosophical questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of mind: Is the external world the way it appears to be? Does God exist? When, if ever, are scientific inferences justified? What is the place of mind in the physical world? Do we have free will? These are difficult questions, and our readings will reflect that difficulty. We will, however, approach the questions themselves slowly. Our overall aim will be, not to answer them, but to understand the answers that philosophers have already given, to assess those answers, and to determine, or begin to determine, which questions we (each of us, individually) still find pressing. I repeat, as a kind of warning: philosophy being what it is, you should expect to come out of this class, not with answers to the above questions, but, instead, with even more questions—though also with a deeper sense of the significance of those questions and of the importance of our continuing to ask them: in short, what you'll learn in this class is something about what would be lost if human beings were to stop doing philosophy.

2 Course Objectives

The aim of this course is, primarily, to teach you how to *do* philosophy, which is to say: how to think dialectically—where to think dialectically is to consider arguments (ideally, all of them) both for and against a given position, and to work towards a view that does justice to all of the arguments you’ve considered. We’ll observe dialectical thinking at work in two different ways: both *within* each of the philosophical texts we’ll be reading and *between* those texts (or rather, their authors). We (or, more accurately, you) will also *practice* dialectical thinking, again in two different contexts: first, in our in-class discussions; and, second, in writing three to five essays over the course of the semester. Although our focus will thus be on the *practice* of philosophy, a secondary aim of the course is for you to acquire knowledge of some of the most important arguments for and against some historically significant philosophical views concerning our knowledge of the external world, the existence (or non-existence) of God, the nature of the mind and human consciousness, and the nature (and existence or non-existence) of free will.

3 Assignments

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is strictly required, and unexcused absences will result in a loss of attendance/participation points. To receive full points for attendance/participation, you need (i) to show up to class and (ii) to show that you’re engaged in the course, either by asking good questions in class, or by emailing me with good questions that I can address in class, or by coming to my office hours.

Essays

You will be required to write at least three essays (of 900–1200 words, or about 3–4 pages, each) over the course of the semester. You will, however, have some freedom as to how to accomplish that task: There will be five occasions (one for each section of the course; see the schedule below) on which I’ll provide you with one or more essay prompts and give you a (somewhat flexible) deadline. At the end of the semester, your overall essay grade (90% of your final grade) will be based on your *three highest* essay scores (with the three essays weighted equally). This means that you can write the first three essays and either (if you’re happy with your grade) be done or (if you’re not) try to improve your scores by writing a fourth and perhaps a fifth essay; or you can write just three essays, choosing the essay topics that strike you as the most interesting; or you can procrastinate and write only the last three essay (though that’s not an option I’d recommend); and so on. The real point here, in any case, is to lower the stakes on at least the first two essays, to give you some time to work out how to write a philosophical essay and some room to make mistakes. So I recommend writing the first two essays and then taking stock. If you’re happy with the results, you’ll have bought yourself some freedom for the remainder of the semester; if

you're not, you'll have three more attempts, and you can use what you've learned from the first two attempts to improve on the third, fourth, and fifth.

I'll provide you with more information—about writing a philosophical essay, about the essay submission process, and about how I'll grade your essays—when I assign the first essay.

4 Policies

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will fail the course, and your case will be recommended to the student judicial board. This means, specifically, that you are not allowed to copy text, or even to closely paraphrase text, either from anything we read, or from a classmate's paper, or from anywhere else (including, of course, the internet). (You can, however, *quote* any text you like, if you make clear that that's what you're doing—by using quotation marks—and you provide an appropriate citation.) To review the university's policies on academic integrity, please consult <http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>. If you still have questions about what is and isn't permissible for you to do in your papers, please talk to me.

Technology in Class

You may bring a computer or tablet to class for use in viewing course material or taking notes, but you are allowed to use it *only* for course-related purposes. If you are caught using your computer or tablet for any non-course-related purpose, you will be marked absent for the day. Similarly, if you are caught using your phone *for any reason at all*, you will be marked absent for the day (in other words, you are *not* permitted to use your phone *even* for course-related purposes).

Disabilities

Washington University is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resources at 314-935-4153. Disability Resources is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for WU students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations.

I will accept Disability Resources VISA forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your VISA within the first two weeks of the semester. For more information, please visit <http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/disability-resources/>.

Assistance

I encourage you to email me to come to office hours to discuss course material or assignments. My general attitude is: if you have questions, ask them. There are also some university-provided services that you might find useful:

Cornerstone. Academic peer mentors, study skills workshops, and other useful services, plus Disability Resources and the university's TRiO program: <http://cornerstone.wustl.edu>

Writing Assistance. Free one-on-one tutoring: <https://writingcenter.wustl.edu>

Diversity and Inclusion. The center's staff supports and advocates for students from traditionally underrepresented or marginalized populations and creates collaborative partnerships with campus and community members to promote dialogue and social change: <https://diversity.wustl.edu/framework/center-diversity-inclusion>

Peer Counseling. <https://unclejoe.wustl.edu>

5 Schedule

All of the readings listed below are from *First Philosophy: Knowing and Being*, Second Edition, edited by Andrew Bailey, with Robert M. Martin (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2013). Page numbers refer to this volume.

The readings listed below are *required*, and page numbers are given to help you locate the specific parts of the book that I'll be requiring you to read. Note, however, that *First Philosophy* also includes substantial supplementary material, which provides helpful background information on the philosophers and texts that we'll be reading in this class. Though I won't be requiring you to read this supplementary material, I do very highly recommend it; in some cases, it will make the required reading much easier, and may even end up saving you time, especially when it comes to writing essays. As a general rule, if you're struggling with the required reading, you should turn to this supplementary material first, and use it to work your way into the text; that way we'll be able to devote class time to the most interesting philosophical and interpretive problems raised by the day's reading.

Introduction		<i>pages</i>
Aug 28	“What is philosophy?”	1–4
Aug 30	“A brief introduction to arguments”	5–11
	“Introductory tips on reading and writing philosophy”	12–14
Epistemology		<i>pages</i>
Sep 4	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (Synopsis, 1 and 2)	27–36
Sep 6	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (3 and 4)	36–47
Sep 11	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (5 and 6)	47–58
Sep 13	Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	65–76
Sep 18	Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (selections)	109–119
Sep 20	Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”	138–139
Sep 25	Code, “Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?”	140–157
Philosophy of Religion		<i>pages</i>
Sep 27	St. Anselm of Canterbury, <i>Proslogion</i>	249–260
Oct 2	St. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>	266–270
Oct 4	Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> (Parts II–VII)	277–295
Oct 9	Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> (Parts VIII–XI)	295–310

Philosophy of Science		<i>pages</i>
Oct 11	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	168–182
Oct 18	Hempel, “Scientific Inquiry: Invention and Test”	185–189
Oct 23	Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations”	194–214
Oct 25	Kuhn, “Objectivity, Value Judgment, and Theory Choice”	219–231
Oct 30	Longino, “Can There Be a Feminist Science?”	233–241

Philosophy of Mind		<i>pages</i>
Nov 1	Ryle, <i>The Concept of Mind</i>	357–365
Nov 6	Putnam, “The Nature of Mental States”	370–378
Nov 8	Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs”	383–397
Nov 13	Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”	400–409
Nov 15	Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” and “What Mary Didn’t Know”	413–418
Nov 20	Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”	422–427

Freedom and Determinism		<i>pages</i>
Nov 27	Rée, <i>The Illusion of Free Will</i>	434–446
Nov 29	Campbell, <i>On Selfhood and Godhood</i>	449–460
Dec 4	Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity”	462–467
Dec 6	Williams and Nagel, “Moral Luck”	471–490