

# PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2008

11:30-12:50 TTh, AL 124

## Prof. Steven Weinstein

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## Materials

[Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings](#), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, Oxford University Press, 2006. Available at UW Bookstore (<http://www.bookstore.uwaterloo.ca/home.html>) or the Feds Used Book Store ([http://businessandservices.feds.ca/feds\\_used\\_books](http://businessandservices.feds.ca/feds_used_books)).

You will also need an *i-clicker*, available at UW Bookstore.

## Course content

This course is an introduction to the parts of philosophy called “metaphysics” and “epistemology”, the parts having to do with what there is and how we know about it. (An introduction to ethics and moral philosophy is taught separately, as PHIL 105.) It is intended as a first course for those thinking of majoring in philosophy, and a stand-alone course for those who are curious about the subject but don’t intend to pursue it further.

We will discuss **four topics** in depth:

### *Epistemology*

**Knowledge of the external world (E1):** How do we come to know about the world? Could it all be a dream? Can we predict the future? What is the status of scientific knowledge?

**Knowledge of other minds (E2):** How do we know about the existence of other minds? Could other people be mindless zombies? Do nonhuman animals have minds?

### *Metaphysics*

**Mind/body problem (M1):** What is the relationship between the brain and the mind? Is the mind a computer? Can computers think?

**Mind in the world (M2):** We understand ourselves as having “free will”, but at the same time we tend to think that our actions are subject to the laws of nature, either deterministic or probabilistic. How do we resolve this apparent conflict?

We will learn about these topics via a mix of **classic and contemporary readings**, most of which are in the course text. Class time will be a mix of **lecture and discussion** devoted to clarifying difficult points in the readings, to setting them in a larger philosophical context, and to generating new and different perspectives on these fascinating topics.

## Additional skills

You will not only learn *about* philosophy in this course; you will also learn to *do* philosophy. The skills involved are not especially technical or specialized. Rather, doing philosophy mostly requires that you pay close attention to **reasoning**: to assumptions and inferences *from* those assumptions. These skills are useful for *all* high-level intellectual work, be it in academic subjects like philosophy, history, and physics, or in professional pursuits such as law, business, and medicine.

## Goals

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Describe four major philosophical problems
- Identify two or more positions on each problem
- Articulate and understand the arguments for these positions
- Evaluate the arguments for these positions
- Formulate and defend views of your own.

## Course Requirements

- Do the readings (available as a course reader) and attend class. Class participation and attendance will count for 10% of your grade. Please note that you'll need to buy an *i-clicker* if you don't already have one; this will allow the professor to obtain real-time feedback and thus enable him to adjust the pace and direction of the lecture and discussion.
- Prepare a study guide for one week's lectures as part of a group of four, using the "wiki" tool on UW-ACE. This will be evaluated by the class (see below) and by the professor, and will count for 20% of your grade.
- Evaluate each week's study guides by taking a short quiz on UW-ACE. These quizzes will count for 15% of your grade. The idea of the quizzes is to provide useful feedback on the study guides, and of course to give you a chance to review the week's material.
- Write two papers, one each on one of the topics in epistemology and one of the topics in metaphysics. These will count for 27.5% each.

## Resources

The professor and the TA are available to meet individually with students, either during office hours or by appointment. Furthermore, the course website will include discussion forums for the various topics, as well as an area in which students can post questions which come up in the reading or in class.

## Schedule

### **Week 1 (Sept 11)**

*Skepticism about the external world I (E1)*

Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy I, II, III', 171-182

### **Week 2 (Sept 16, 18)**

*Skepticism about the external world II (E1)*

Grau, 'Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and *The Matrix*', 195-202

Hume, 'Of Skepticism with Regard to the Senses,' 211-225

### **Week 3 (Sept 23, 25)**

*Induction I (E1)*

Hume, 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (excerpts)', 225-251

### **Week 4 (Sept 30, Oct 2)**

*Induction II (E1)*

Salmon, 'The Problem of Induction,' 251-273

Goodman's New Riddle of Induction, 786-787

### **Week 5 (Oct 7, 9)**

*Realism (Readings to be supplied) (E1)*

McMullin, 'A Case for Scientific Realism'

Pickering, 'Against Correspondence: A Constructivist View of Experiment and the Real'

Hacking, 'Experimentation and Scientific Realism'

### **Week 6 (Oct 14, 16)**

*Other minds (E2)*

Russell, 'The Argument from Analogy for Other Minds,' 285-287

Ryle, 'Descartes's Myth', 287-295

Lewis, 'Mad Pain and Martian Pain,' 302-308

Dennett, 'Intentional Systems,' 308-321

### **Week 7 (Oct 21, 23)**

*Mind as Computer (M1)*

Putnam, 'Turing Machines,' 326-328

Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence,' 328-341

Searle, 'Minds, Brains, and Programs' 341-354

***First paper due: Oct 24***

***Week 8 (Oct 28, 30)***

*Consciousness (E2, M1)*

Nagel, 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', 354-363

Jackson, 'What Mary Didn't Know,' 363-366

Lewis, 'Knowing What It's Like,' 366-368

***Week 9 (Nov 4) (No class Nov. 6)***

*Free Will and Determinism (M2)*

Hume, 'Of Liberty and Necessity', 440-451

Taylor, 'Freedom and Determinism,' 451-464

***Week 10 (Nov 11, 13)***

*Personal Identity (M2)*

Perry, 'A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality', 368-389

Williams, 'The Self and Future' 389-399

***Week 11 (Nov 18, 20)***

*Personal Identity (M2)*

Parfit, 'Personal Identity', 399-412

Dennett, 'Where Am I?', 412-421

***Week 12 (Nov 25, 27)***

*The Meaning of Life*

Nagel, 'The Absurd' 21-27

Wolf, 'The Meanings of Lives, 62-74

***Second paper due: December 8***

**Further information**

*University of Waterloo Policy on Plagiarism*

It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of what constitutes responsible behaviour in a class, what constitutes plagiarism, and your rights and responsibilities with respect to these issues. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Waterloo's policies on these issues, as outlined in the calendar and available on the university web site at

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.pdf>

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.pdf>

See also <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/%7Esager/plagiarism.html> for "How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors."

*Note for students with disabilities*

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term. Once registered with OPD, please meet with the professor, in confidence, during my office hours to discuss your needs.