

## CONTACTS

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The goal of this course is to have you gain some familiarity with the methods and subject matter of philosophy by looking at a series of classic questions: Do we have minds or souls that are distinct from our bodies? Do we have free will? What does it take for us to survive, and why does it matter to us? Should we fear death? Readings are primarily drawn from contemporary works, with a smattering of historical sources.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The course requirements (for the non-writing sections) are two short papers, a midterm, a final exam, and regular attendance and participation in sections. All these grading mechanisms are testing the development of general philosophical abilities by having you engage with and reflect critically on material we cover in class. The readings for class are an entry point to lecture topics, but it is *the lectures* which are most geared towards helping you develop the skills on the basis of which you'll be tested. Also, since there is lots of material covered in lecture that is not covered in the readings, attendance of lectures will be critical to your success in the course.

Papers are about 4-5 pages in length and will be graded according to standards we'll discuss in class. Extensions on papers will generally be granted if a request is made for good reasons *well before (at least 3 days before)* the due date of the assignment. Otherwise papers are docked 1/3 a letter grade (i.e. A to A-, A- to B+) per day (including weekends and holidays). Your final grade for the course is tallied as follows:

- 15% Section Attendance and Participation
- 15% First Paper (4–5pp.)
- 20% Midterm
- 25% Second Paper (4–5pp.)
- 25% Final Exam

\*\*\*Note: Requirements and Grading for Writing Sections will be different!\*\*\*

## TEXTS

Several readings will be drawn from the following two texts available at the University book store.

- + A Dialog on Personal Identity and Immortality (Perry)
- + A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will (Kane)

Additional readings are posted on the course website at:

[www.jshaw.net/courses/problems.html](http://www.jshaw.net/courses/problems.html)

You will need a user-name and password to access restricted documents on the site. You can find this on the syllabus handed out the first day of classes. If you lose this password, you can find it on Blackboard.

## PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Evidence of dishonesty will be ruthlessly pursued, and confirmation of dishonesty results in an "F" for the course and notification of the undergraduate dean. You are responsible for understanding what plagiarism is.

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

This is a rough schedule of topics and readings which can change during the semester.

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|-----------------|--|
| Mon., August 29 | Introduction: Methods and Subject Matter of Philosophy                                       |
| Wed., August 31 | Argument Structure and Techniques<br><i>Read: Jim Pryor: How to Write a Philosophy Paper</i> |

## THE MIND/BODY PROBLEM

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|--------------------|---|
| Wed., September 7  | Dualism v. Materialism, Basic Arguments for Dualism<br><i>Read: Meditations on First Philosophy (Selections), Descartes</i>         |
| Mon., September 12 | Arguments for Dualism and Leibniz' Law<br><i>Read: "Dualism and Physicalism" (Selection) van Inwagen</i>                            |
| Wed., September 14 | Causal Issues for Dualism<br><i>Read: "An Unfortunate Dualist", Smullyan</i>  |
| Mon., September 19 | Materialism, First Pass: Identity Theory<br><i>Read: "Sensations and Brain Processes", Smart</i>                                    |
| Wed., September 21 | Materialism, Second Pass: Functionalism<br><i>Read: "The Nature of Mental States", Putnam</i>                                       |
| Mon., September 26 | Functionalism Ct'd<br><i>Read: "A Conversation with Einstein's Brain", Hofstadter</i>   |
| Wed., September 28 | Dualists Strike Back: the Knowledge Argument<br><i>Read: Epiphenomenal Qualia, Jackson</i><br><u>First Paper Topics Distributed</u> |

## FREE WILL

- Mon., October 3 Free Will and Determinism  
*Read: Kane, Ch. 1*
- Wed., October 5 Classical Compatibilism  
*Read: Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding  
(selection), Hume & Kane, Ch. 2*
- Tue., October 11 The Consequence Argument for Incompatibilism and a Reply  
*Read: Kane, Ch. 3 pp. 23–28*  
**\*First Paper Due\***
- Wed., October 12 Further Troubles for Classical Compatibilism  
*Read: "Freedom and Determinism" (Selection), Taylor &  
Kane, Ch. 3 pp. 28–31*
- Mon., October 17 Libertarianism, its Indeterministic Discontents, and Dualist  
Extra-Factors  
*Read: Kane, Ch. 4–5 pp. 32–42*
- Wed. October 19 Hard Determinism and Skepticism: Can We Do Without Free  
Will or Moral Responsibility?  
*Read: Kane, Ch. 7*
- Mon. October 24 **\*\*\*In-Class Midterm\*\*\***

## PERSONAL IDENTITY AND SURVIVAL

- Wed. October 26 The Problem of Personal Identity  
*No New Readings*
- Mon., October 31 Dualist Theories  
*Read: Perry, First Night*
- Wed., November 2 Somatic Theories and Conventionalism  
*Read: Perry, Second Night*
- Mon., November 7 Psychological Theories  
*No New Readings*
- Wed., November 9 Fusion/Fission  
*Read: "What We Believe Ourselves to Be" (selection), Parfit*  
Second Paper Topics Distributed
- Mon., November 14 Psychological v. Somatic Theories Finale  
*Read: Perry, Third Night*
- Wed., November 16 **\*No Class\***

DEATH

Mon., November 21 Challenges to Harmfulness of Death  
*Read: "Letter to Menoeceus" (selection) Epicurus &  
"On the Nature of Things" (selection), Lucretius*

**\*Second Paper Due Tuesday November 22nd!!\***

**\*\*\*Thanksgiving Break\*\*\***

Mon., November 28 The Deprivation Account  
*Read: "Death", Nagel*

Wed., November 30 The Deprivation Account ct'd  
*No Readings*

Mon./Wed.,  
December 5/7 Wrap Up/Review  
*No Readings*

**\*Final Exam Questions Handed Out\***

**\*\*\*Final Exam: Friday, December 16th from 12PM to 1:50PM\*\*\***