

Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2013, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz



Zeit	Tuesday 11.45am - 1:15pm
Raum	Hauptgebäude HS 01.13
Website	http://moodle.uni-graz.at
Lehrender	Dirk Kindermann
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Telefon	0316/380-2314
Büro	Room 513
Sprechstunde	Tuesday 5-6pm & by appointment

Course Description

The course is an introduction to some of the great questions and problems in philosophy. The course is also an introduction to basic methods in philosophy. We will read contemporary and historical philosophers, focusing on topics in theoretical philosophy.

Our topics:

1. Logic and reasoning: What is a good argument?
2. God, faith, and the problem of evil: Is there a god/gods? Can god's existence be proven? If there is a god, why is there so much evil in the world?
3. Knowledge and skepticism: What is knowledge? What, if anything, can we know?
4. The Mind-Body Problem: Is your mind part of the physical world, or are your mind and body made up of different stuffs?
5. Free Will and Responsibility: Do we have free will? Can we be held responsible for what isn't under our control?

Course Goals

The course gives you an opportunity to think about some of the most interesting philosophical problems and questions. You will learn how to best address these questions and problems. We will learn what an **argument** is, how to **reconstruct arguments** for and against a position, and how to **evaluate arguments**. At the end of the semester, they should be able to:

- reconstruct philosophical arguments and debates
- be familiar with the most important answers and position and be able to critically discuss them
- competently use core philosophical terminology
- critically reflect and discuss their own views
- write a philosophical essay that satisfies academic standards.

Readings

You can find the readings we will discuss in class in a section of the philosophy library that is reserved for our course. You can also find them on the [Moodle course website](#).

Each week, the primary text will be accompanied by a reading from [Blackburn \(2013\)](#). It will be useful to purchase this book.



Online Updates

Please visit the [Moodle course website](#) regularly. Every week, you will find updates and new resources.

Prerequisites

None

Attendance

Attendance in class is obligatory. You may miss up to three sessions. I kindly request that you send me an email if you know you'll have to miss a session.

Assignments & Assessment

I. Participation in class (10%)

Your participation in class discussions – regular attendance is a presupposition for a good grade.

2. Questions on the week's reading (15%)

The purpose of these questions is to make sure you're doing the week's reading. For (almost) every session, you have to read and think through one or more philosophical texts. Write down **three questions** on each text and upload it on <http://moodle.uni-graz.at> at least **60 minutes** before class. Late submissions are not possible. Don't forget to write your name and university ID on the document. Your questions should reflect your critical reading of the text: for instance, questions that go beyond the text; questions that highlight aspects in the text that you deem important or interesting; or questions that show me what you haven't understood to your own satisfaction. For every set of questions, you can get a maximum of 2 points (2 points if your questions reflect a critical reading of the text, 1 point if your questions give minimal proof that you have read the text). To achieve maximum points (15% of the final grade), you have to get **18 points** – that's 2 points in all 9 question sets.

3. Presentation (25%)

You'll have to give a short presentation in class (10–15 minutes), in groups of 2–3 speakers. Please write your presentation as a group; that is, meet before class and work together (see below: team work). Your goal should be to give a **brief and concise** summary and evaluation of the **most important** theses and arguments of the week's primary paper. A **handout** of 1–2 pages is obligatory and will be assessed, too. You have to send your handout to me **by Monday night**.

Feel free to come to my office hour a week before your presentation or to contact me by email. If you're encountering difficulties with the paper – don't worry, you're probably not the only one. Email me and/or openly address in your presentation what you found difficult.

4. 2 Essays (50%)

You'll have to write two short essays during the semester. The deadline for the first essay is **Friday, 29 November 2013**. The deadline for the second essay is the last day of class, **Friday, 24 January 2014**.

Your essay should be around 1500 words long. You can choose from a handful of questions. In your essay, you should try to answer the question as clearly as possible, showing your understanding of the philosophical issues as well as your evaluation of them. We will have an entire session dedicated to the question of how to write an essay in philosophy.

How to Prepare for Class

- **Reading:** You will spend a lot of time reading in this course. There is a reading assignment for each lecture meeting—typically a paper from the Perry et al. anthology (readings not in this anthology are marked '★' below). Many of these papers are cornerstones of the philosophical tradition. While they may be short, they are very challenging: expect to read them at least two or three times. In philosophy, you need to “**read aggressively**” (see Perry et al., pp. 2–4): Read closely, analyse, question, reconstruct, take notes, continue . . . If you have trouble understanding what an author says, or any other question concerning the course, you can always **consult me or your tutor for advice**.
- Always do the reading(s) *before* the tutorial. Don't miss any readings – it will be hard to catch up.

- **Tutorials:** We will often ask you to prepare a **small prompt** for tutorials. You may be asked to give a short (1–2 pages) answer to a question pertaining to that week’s reading, analyse and evaluate an argument, or come up with an argument for or against a view. Tutorials are a great chance to raise questions about the reading: your tutor is there to help you, so don’t be shy!
- **Ask questions** in class: If a point is unclear to you, chances are your classmates will appreciate additional clarification, too. Don’t be shy to ask questions in class!
- **Philosophical writing:** Writing a philosophy essay requires a number of skills. Use the web resources listed below, come to the lecture dedicated to essay writing (see course schedule below), and always re-read your essay before you submit it: apply the reading skills you’re acquiring to your own writing.
- **Team work:** You will find it helpful to **team up** with fellow students to **explain philosophical ideas and arguments to each other** and to **critically discuss** them. What you invest in helping others will come back doubly when you write your essays: You haven’t understood a view or argument unless you can express it clearly and precisely.

Plagiarism

Don’t plagiarise. It’s that simple. Plagiarism is an infringement of intellectual copyright and a serious offence, and is not taken lightly by the university. It is easy to avoid it: whenever you help yourself to the ideas of others, make their authorship explicit by **referencing** them. In addition, use **quotation marks** when you cite them word for word. When in doubt, always reference the source you’re using: better a reference too many than too few.

Course Schedule

God & the Problem of Evil		
3 15/10/2013	Introduction	What is an argument? Optional: J. Rosenberg, “The Character of Philosophy”, in Rosenberg (1986, 16–26) ; I. Kant, “What is enlightenment?”
4 22/10/2013	The Ontological Argument	Anselm, “The Ontological Argument” Blackburn, pp. 149–58 J. Perry et al., “Logical Toolkit” (. 9–14) J. Pryor, Vocabulary Describing Arguments (Website)
5 29/10/2013	The Cosmological Argument	T. Aquinas, “The Existence of God” Blackburn, pp. 159–63 J. Pryor, Guidelines on Reading Philosophy (Website) , J. Perry et al., 1–8
6 5/11/2013	The Problem of Evil	J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” Blackburn, pp. 168–76

Knowledge & Skepticism		
7 12/11/2013	Skepticism	R. Descartes, " <u>Meditations on First Philosophy</u> " I & II Blackburn, pp. 15–33, 45–48
8 19/11/2013	How to write an essay in philosophy	J. Perry et al., "Writing Philosophy Papers" (pp. 15–17) J. Pryor, Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper (Website)
9 26/11/2013	Knowledge	E. Gettier, " <u>Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?</u> " T. Grundmann, pp. 86–94, 99–109
29/11/2013	Deadline Essay 1	

Mind & Body		
10 3/12/2013	From Descartes to the Identity Theory	Blackburn, pp. 50–57, 63–69 J.J.C. Smart: "Sensations and Brain Processes"
11 10/12/2013	Individual Appointments: Essay Feedback	
12 17/12/2013	No session	
13 7/1/2014	Phenomenal consciousness and Physicalism	F. Jackson, " <u>What Mary Didn't Know</u> " D. Lewis, " <u>Knowing What It's Like</u> "

Free Will & Responsibility		
14 14/1/2014	Free Will & Determinism: Incompatibilism	P. van Inwagen: " <u>The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism</u> " Blackburn, pp. 81–91
15 21/1/2014	Compatibilism	H.G. Frankfurt, " <u>Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility</u> " Blackburn, pp. 91–119
24/1/2014	Deadline Essay 2	

Further Introductory Literature

- Immanuel Kant: “What is Enlightenment?”
- Rosenberg (2004). *The Practice of Philosophy. A Handbook for Beginners*
- Russell (1912). *The Problems of Philosophy*
- Nagel (1987). *What does it all mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*
- Conee & Sider (2005). *Riddles of Existence. A Guided Tour of Metaphysics*

Resources

- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>
Free App gratis in the itunes store: <https://itunes.apple.com/en/app/sep/id342210166?mt=8>
- Craig (1998) Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Online at www.rep.routledge.com
- Audi (1999): Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Hauptbibliothek II 726908 & HB2-C19
- Blackburn (2008): Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. Institutsbibliothek U-LPh88, Hauptbibliothek I 596361
- Waibl & Herdina (2011): Dictionary of Philosophical Terms/Wörterbuch philosophischer Fachbegriffe: German-English/English-German. Deutsch-Englisch/Englisch-Deutsch. Institutsbibliothek U-LPh75/CD
- Precht & Burkard (2008): Metzler Lexikon Philosophie: Begriffe und Definitionen. Hauptbibliothek I 719702
- Precht (2004): Grundbegriffe der analytischen Philosophie
- Mautner (2005): The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy
- Lacey & Proudfoot (1996): The Routledge Dictionary of Philosophy. Hauptbibliothek I 582860
- The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.iep.utm.edu
- How to read a philosophical paper (J. Pryor):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>
- How to write an essay in philosophy (J. Pryor):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- What is an argument? (J. Pryor): <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/argument.html>
- Describing arguments (J. Pryor):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/validity.html>
- How to analyse concepts (J. Pryor): <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/analyses.html>
- A philosophical glossary for beginners (J. Pryor):
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/glossary.html>
- Classics of philosophy online: www.zeno.org/Philosophie
- Researching papers online: <http://scholar.google.at>
- PhilPapers (Online data base of papers & books):
<http://philpapers.org>

Philosophy on the Web (Podcasts etc.)

- BBC's weekly "In Our Time" with Melvyn Bragg: www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/iotp. Z.B.: "Cogito ergo sum": http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/iotp/iotp_20110428-1000b.mp3 "Consciousness": http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/iotp/iotp_19991125-0900a.mp3 "Free Will": http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/iotp/iotp_20110310-1023b.mp3
- Oxford University Online Lectures, presented by Marianne Talbot: "Philosophy for Beginners". www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/podcasts/philosophy_for_beginners
More online materials by the faculty of philosophy at Oxford: www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/podcasts
- Northern Institute of Philosophy: The 10-Minute Puzzle. www.abdn.ac.uk/nip/tenminutepuzzle
- Philosophy Talk with John Perry and Ken Taylor: www.philosophytalk.org
- Northern Institute of Philosophy: The 2-Minute Puzzle. www.abdn.ac.uk/nip/twominutepuzzle
- www.philosophybites.com
- www.partiallyexaminedlife.com
- Six Famous Thought Experiments, Animated in 60 Seconds Each: www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2011/10/19/open-university-thought-experiments/
- 50 Best Philosophy Podcasts: <http://people.wku.edu/michael.seidler/50podcasts.pdf>
- Various Philosophy Apps ...

References

- Audi, R. (Ed.). (1999). *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, 2nd edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackburn, S. (1999). *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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- Blackburn, S. (2013). *Denken. Die großen Fragen der Philosophie* (2nd ed.). Primus Verlag.
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Waibl, E. & Herdina, P. (2011). *Dictionary of Philosophical Terms/Wörterbuch philosophischer Fachbegriffe: German-English/English-German. Deutsch-Englisch/Englisch-Deutsch*. Stuttgart: UTB.