INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy 104 -- Fall Term 2021

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Syllabus Part II – Topics and Readings

Textbook: Philosophy: Asking Questions - Seeking Answers by Stephen Stich & Tom Donaldson (Oxford University Press, 2019). The book is available at the Rutgers University Book Store. New and used copies can also be purchased on Amazon and on many other online booksellers. There is a digital version available here: HERE.

In the reading assignments below, the textbook is abbreviated S&D.

All assigned and recommended readings that are not in the textbook are available on the class Canvas website.

Assigned reading, listening and viewing should be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

Please Note: Revised and updated versions of the Topics and Readings may be posted from time to time. Whenever a change is made, it will be announced in class and in the Announcements section Canvas site.

WEEK 1
September 1
Topics:
(i) Introduction to the Course
(ii) What Is Philosophy?

Reading:
(ii) Plato, Apology
(iii) (Recommended but not required): Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy,” (Click HERE). If you would prefer to listen to this, click “Listen to this Text” at the top of the page.

Listening:
Philosophy Bites Podcast: “What Is Philosophy?” (Click HERE) Listen to the whole podcast if you have time, but be sure to listen thru 10:53 (= 10 minutes, 53 seconds)
WEEK 2
September 6 (Labor Day Holiday – No Rutgers Classes)

September 8 (This week only, Monday classes meet on Wednesday. If you are in a Section that usually meets on Monday, the Section will meet on Wednesday, September 8.)

Topics: The Philosophy of Religion - Some Important Preliminaries
(i) The Importance of Definitions
(ii) The Definition of “God”
(iii) Religious Tolerance
(iv) Can Religion Be “True For Me”?
(v) Are Reasons Necessary?

Reading:
Levinovitz, “The Problem With Religious Tolerance”
S&D, Chapter 3, “Does God Exist?” pp. 29-31

WEEK 3
Attendance will be taken in Discussion Sections starting in Week 3
September 13

Topics:
(ii) The First Cause Argument
(iii) Leibniz’s Cosmological Argument

Reading:
S&D, Ch. 3, “Does God Exist?” pp. 31-38

Listening (Strongly recommended, but not required): The BBC debate between Frederick Copleston & Bertrand Russell

Part 1 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BWFPBTqSN0), and
Part 2 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7kJOQENaNo)
Each part is about 9 minutes.

September 15

Topic:
The Design Argument (a.k.a. The Teleological Argument)

Reading:
(ii) Paley, “Natural Theology”
(iii) (Recommended but not required): Selections from Hume’s Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Parts 2, 5 & 9)

Viewing: (Strongly recommended but not required): “Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2xyrel-2vl). This is a well-made and very engaging video. But it’s almost 2 hours long, and some of the best material is toward the end.

WEEK 4
September 20

Topics:
(i) Anselm’s Ontological Argument
(ii) Alvin Plantinga and the Sensus Divinitatis

Reading:
(i) S&D, Chapter 3, “Does God Exist?” pp. 46-50
(ii) “An interview with Alvin Plantinga”
September 22
Topic:
   (i) Pragmatic Arguments for God's Existence: The Ethics of Belief & Pascal's Wager
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Chapter 3, “Does God Exist?” pp. 50-58
   (ii) Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief,” pp. 1-6
   (iii) Saka, “Pascal’s Wager About God”

WEEK 5
September 27
Topic: The Problem of Evil & Other Arguments Against the Existence of God
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Ch. 4, “Why Does God Leave Us to Suffer?” pp. 59-75
   (ii) John Mackie, “Free Will and the Problem of Evil”
   (ii) (Recommended but not required): Selection from Hume’s Dialogues (Part 10)

September 29
Topic: Can We Be Completely Certain of Anything?
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Ch. 5, “Can We Be Completely Certain of Anything?” pp. 77-95
   (ii) Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, First Meditation, pp. 1-4
   (ii) (Recommended but not required): Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, pp. 4-19

Viewing: (Strongly recommended but not required): The Matrix (the classic film directed by Lana & Lilly Wachowski). The Wachowskis got the basic idea from Descartes! If you haven’t seen it, you definitely should. If you have seen it, you might want to watch it again. It is available on Amazon and YouTube for $3.99.

WEEK 6
October 4
Topic: Can We Trust Our Senses?
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Ch. 6, “Can We Trust Our Senses?” pp. 97-106
   (ii) (Recommended but not required): Locke, Selections from An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

October 6
Topic: Can We Trust Our Senses? (continued)
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Ch. 6, “Can We Trust Our Senses?” pp. 106-119
   (ii) (Recommended but not required): Berkeley, Selections from Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonus (If you would like to read more than this brief selection, a link to the complete text of Berkeley’s Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonus is available in the Canvas Module for this week.)

WEEK 7
October 11
Topic: The Problem of Induction
Reading:
   (i) S&D, Ch. 7, “Will the Sun Rise Tomorrow?” pp. 121-139
   (ii) (Recommended but not required): Hume, Selections from Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding
   (iii) (Recommended but not required): Salmon, “An Encounter With David Hume”
October 13
Topic: Epistemology a.k.a. The Theory of Knowledge
Reading:
(i) S&D, Ch. 8, “What Is Knowledge?” pp. 141-150

WEEK 8
October 18
Topic: Epistemology a.k.a. The Theory of Knowledge
Reading:
(i) S&D, Ch. 8, “What Is Knowledge?” pp. 150-159
(ii) Christina Starmans & Ori Friedman, “Expert or Esoteric? Philosophers attribute Knowledge Differently Than All Other Academics”

October 20
Topic: Free Will
Reading:
(i) S&D, Ch. 9, “Do We Have Free Will? pp. 161-170

WEEK 9
October 25
Topic: Free Will
Reading:
(i) S&D, Ch. 9, “Do We Have Free Will? pp. 170-177
(ii) (Recommended but not required): William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”

October 27
Topic: The Philosophy of Mind: Dualism & Behaviorism
Reading:

WEEK 10
November 1
Topic: The Philosophy of Mind: The Mind-Brain Identity Theory & Functionalism
Reading:

November 3
Topic: Personal Identity: The Soul Theory
Reading:
(i) S&D, Ch. 11, “Will You Be the Same Person in Ten Years? Could You Survive Death?” pp. 213-221
(ii) Perry, A Dialogue on Personal Identity & Immortality, The First Night

WEEK 11
November 8
Topic: Personal Identity
Reading:
  i) S&D, Ch. 11, “Will You Be the Same Person in Ten Years? Could You Survive Death?” pp. 221-242
  ii) Perry, A Dialogue on Personal Identity & Immortality, The Second Night & The Third Night

November 10
Topic: Applied Ethics – Poverty, Vegetarianism, Abortion
Reading:
  S&D, Ch. 15, “What Should We Do? (Part II)” pp. 309-332
Viewing:
  TED Talk: Peter Singer “The Why and How of Effective Altruism” (Click HERE)
Listening (Strongly recommended, but not required):
  Philosophy Bites Podcast: Jeff McMahan on vegetarianism (Click HERE)
  Practical Ethics Bites Podcast: Rebecca Roache “The Rights & Wrongs of Abortion” (Click HERE)

WEEK 12
November 15
Reading:
Listening:
  Philosophy Bites Podcast: Susan Wolf on the meaning of life (Click HERE)

November 17
Topic: Normative Ethics, Part 2: Utilitarianism & Kantian Ethics
Reading:
  S&D, Ch. 14, “What Should We Do? (Part I)” pp. 287-308

WEEK 13
November 22
Reading:
  S&D, Ch. 12, “Are There Objective Truths About Right and Wrong?” pp. 243-253
Viewing:
  Stephen Darwall on God and Morality, Parts 1 & 2 (Click HERE and HERE)

WEEK 14
November 29
Topic: Critical Ethics (a.k.a. Meta-Ethics) Part 2: Subjectivism, Expressivism and the Qualified Attitude Theory
Reading:
  S&D, Ch. 12, “Are There Objective Truths About Right and Wrong?” pp. 253-266

December 1
Topic: Race - Is Race an Illusion?
Reading:
  Joshua Glasgow, “Is Race an Illusion or a (Very) Basic Reality?
Viewing:
Race: *The Power of an Illusion* – Episode 1, “The Difference Between Us” (Click [HERE](#))

**WEEK 15**

December 6  
**Topic:** Race – Is Race a Social Construction  
**Reading:**  
Sally Haslanger, “Tracing the Sociopolitical Reality of Race”  
**Viewing:**  
*Race: The Power of an Illusion* – Episode 2, “The Story We Tell” (Click [HERE](#))

December 8 & December 13  
**Topic:** Catch-up and Review