

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

University of Notre Dame

FALL 2019



Paul Klee
Senecio, 1922

Notre Dame, Fall 2019

Course Description

In this course we will seek answers to one of the most central questions: What does it mean to be human? Or simply: What makes *you* a human being? In dialogue with eminent figures from the history of philosophy and with contemporary philosophers, we will discuss questions such as: What can I know? What should I believe? Am I a mind or a brain? Am I identical with my past and with my future self? What should I do? Am I really free? How can we alleviate human suffering? What is important for our social identity? And finally, what makes me the person I am?

The focus is on close reading and discussion of seminal texts, including Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and Kant, and on developing and practicing a culture of discussion in the classroom and a culture of writing outside the classroom.

Philosophy University Seminar: PHIL 13185 - 01

Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30 – 10:45 am
Place: Corbett Family Hall E478
Instructor: Prof. Katharina Kraus
E-mail: kkraus2@nd.edu
Office: Malloy Hall 309
Office hour: Tuesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 pm (and by appointment)

SAKAI:

Course-related material, such as additional readings (except for the mandatory textbook), lecture slides, assignments, will be made available on the SAKAI portal. Make sure that you have joined the course and adjusted your settings to receive notifications and messages. Important updates will be posted on the course page and sent via email through the SAKAI messaging system.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, you should expect to improve the following skills:

- **Arguing convincingly and responsibly for a position;**
- Reading philosophical texts carefully and critically;
- Evaluating philosophical arguments regarding their logical structure (or validity), adequacy (or soundness), and their effectiveness (or informativeness);
- Communicating views effectively in fruitful discussions;
- Clear argumentative writing;
- Contributing to group learning by engaging in group activities;
- Understanding significant themes in philosophy and being able to relate them to other areas of study as well as to real-life issues.

Policies and expectations

University seminars are designed as discussion-based seminars. You are expected to arrive on time for each session and be prepared to participate actively. Your **preparation** includes in particular careful reading of the assigned texts and completion of all required assignments. **Active participation** means that you actively engage in class discussions and group activities. All participants are expected to show respect for the other seminar participants.

Please silence all cell phones before class begins and do **not use electronic devices** (laptops, phones, etc.) during class unless truly necessary. Please bring your **textbook** to class and, if applicable, physical copies of the readings, including printed PDFs.

Be sure to **plan your time and workload** wisely over the course of the semester and that you turn in all assignments on time. Late submissions will be penalized with a point deduction. Remember that the readings and assignments are intended as a springboard for your own independent and hopefully rewarding exploration of the topic.

This course follows Notre Dame's binding **Honor Code** (<http://honorcode.nd.edu/the-honor-code/>). All work submitted must be your own. Your sources must be properly cited. Direct quotes from others must be enclosed in quotation marks. If you have questions about how to attribute your sources, contact the instructor. Any instance of academic dishonesty will be subject to penalty, and in serious cases may result in failure of the entire course or expulsion from the university.

Attendance is compulsory and will be checked at the beginning of every class. You may have up to three unexcused absences (however, you are asked to notify me in advance if you will be absent). More than three unexcused absences may result in failing the entire course. It is the student's responsibility to make up the missed classes. Absences may be considered excused only if they are officially excused according to University procedures (e.g., student illness or family emergency).

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Class participation: 15%**
- **5 Reflection Statements** (about 400 words each) (*5-point scale*): **25%**
- **2 Short Paper** (about 1,000 words) (*letter grade*): **25%** (first 10%, second 15%)
- **1 Term Paper** (about 2,000 words) (*letter grade*): **30 %**
- **Debate Statements (Group activity)** (*5-point scale*): **5%**

ASSIGNMENTS:

ASSIGNMENT 1: REFLECTION STATEMENTS (5 p each; 25 total)

In each week (except for the weeks 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, and 15), you will be asked to write a short reflection statement of about **400 words** and submit it by **Friday, 6:00 pm** through SAKAI. In your statement, you engage with the week's readings and develop your own reply to the week's question in the most compelling way possible. They should be handed in as a Word document (Times New Roman, 12 pt., file name: YourLastName_Reflection_No.doc(x)) through the assignment function of SAKAI. You will get five points (5 p) for an excellent example of a strong statement on a given day, three points (3 p) for a reasonably good statement, one point (1 p) for a statement that is either poor or not particularly relevant to the question, and no points (0 p) for not submitting a statement at all. The reflection statements are due in weeks 3, 5, 8, 9 and 12, and there will be an optional one in week 14.

ASSIGNMENT 2: SHORT PAPERS (25 p in total; first 10 p, second 15 p)

At the end of each Part I and II, you will be expected to write a short essay of about **1,000 words**, in which you respond to a set question. The paper should be handed in as a Word document (.doc or .docx; Times New Roman, 12 pt., 1.5 spacing; file name: YourLastName_ShortPaper_No.doc(x)) through the assignment function of SAKAI. and uploaded on SAKAI by **Monday, October 7, and November 11, 12:00 pm (noon)** (see schedule).

The aim of the short papers is to provide an answer to the set question by **analyzing** a position or key argument regarding content and structure, and by **critically assessing** its adequacy, effectiveness, and applicability. Grade will be based on coherence of the thesis, strength of the argument, adequate use of relevant primary texts, clarity of structure, and correctness of form.

*** Timely completion of the assignment is highly important! Late submissions will be penalized by being marked down one percentage point per day (24 hours). ***

ASSIGNMENT 3: TERM PAPER (30 P)

At the end of the course, you will be expected to write a term paper of **2,000 words** in which you answer a philosophical question from a list provided. The paper should be handed in as a Word document (.doc or .docx; Times New Roman, 12 pt., 1.5 spacing, file name: YourLastName_TermPaper.doc(x)) through the assignment function of SAKAI by **Monday, December 16, at 10:30 am** (see schedule). You will be given the opportunity to revise the paper. If you desire to do so, you are asked to submit a draft by **Monday, December 2**, and you will receive my feedback by Wednesday, December 11. Additional office hours will be available on **Wednesday, December 11**.

The aim of the term paper is to discuss a philosophical question and develop a position on the basis of the texts and theories you have encountered in the course. In particular, you are asked to defend the position by producing effective arguments *for* it and rebutting relevant objections to or arguments *against* it. Grade will be based on coherence of the position, strength of the argument, adequate use of relevant primary texts, clarity of structure, and correctness of form.

***** Timely completion of all assignment is highly important! Late submissions will be penalized by being marked down one percentage point per day (24 hours). *****

ASSIGNMENT 4: DEBATE STATEMENTS (GROUP ACTIVITY) (5 p)

In the last weeks of the semester, we will have structured debates in the classroom, which will give you the opportunity to prepare (in a small group) and present short **debate statements of about 2 minutes** (opening speech, rebuttal speech, or final appeal). The group’s debate statements will be graded on a 5-point scale. Failing to present a statement will result in a zero. The statements will be graded according to the following criteria: adequacy, strength, and originality of the argument(s); convincing examples; ability to respond adequately to objections; engagement with the audience. More information will be provided along the way.

Required Texts:

- For the mandatory readings assigned to each session, please consult the **schedule**.
- Most texts are taken from the textbook *Introduction to Philosophy*, edited by J. Perry, M. Bratman, and J.M. Fisher. All other texts will be made available through **SAKAI**.

GRADING:

You can earn a total of **100 points** in this course. The final grade is determined according to the following scheme:

Total Amount of Points (p)	Letter Grade
100-94	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
76-79	C+
73-75	C
70-72	C-
66-69	D+
63-65	D
60-62	D-
< 60	F

SCHEDULE

Note that this is a tentative schedule subject to alteration at the professor's discretion!

IP = *Introduction to Philosophy*, edited by J. Perry, M. Bratman, and J.M. Fisher

WEEK 1

Aug. 27, 2019 **General Introduction**

Aug. 29, 2019 **Why Philosophy Matters**

- Plato, *Apology* (Excerpts) (SAKAI, also IP: 21-36)

PART I

THE MIND: KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF, & PERSONHOOD

WEEK 2 *What should I doubt?*

Sept. 3, 2019 Descartes' Skepticism of the External World

- Descartes, *Meditation I* (IP 170-172)

Skill Session: Reading Philosophical Texts

Sept. 5, 2019 Hume's Skepticism of Causation

- Hume, *Enquiry IV.1-2* (IP 225-229, first column)

WEEK 3 *What can I know?*

Sept. 10, 2019 Descartes on Self-Knowledge

- Descartes, *Meditation II* (IP 172-175)

Skill Session: Philosophical Arguments

Sept. 12, 2019 Hume on Causation

- Hume, *Enquiry V.1-2* (IP 231-235, first column)

**** REFLECTION STATEMENT 1 is due Fri., Sept. 13, 6:00 pm ****

WEEK 4 *What do I believe?*

Sept. 17, 2019 Descartes's Proof of God

- Descartes, *Meditation V* (IP 184-187)

Sept. 19, 2019 Pascal's Wager

- Pascal, *The Wager* (IP 50-53)

WEEK 5 *Who am I?*

Sept. 24, 2019 Descartes' Dualism: Mind & Body

- Descartes, *Meditation VI* (IP 187-193)

Sept. 26, 2019 Materialism: Of Minds and Brains

- Armstrong, "The Nature of Mind" (IP 290-297)

**** REFLECTION STATEMENT 2 is due Fri., Sept. 27, 6:00 pm ****

- WEEK 6** *What makes me the person I am?*
- Oct. 1, 2019 Locke on Personhood and Consciousness
- Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, “Of Identity and Diversity” (SAKAI)
- *Skill Session: Essay Writing***
- Oct. 3, 2019 Wrap-Up Session *Part I: The Mind*
- No reading assignment
- *** FIRST SHORT PAPER is due Mon., Oct. 7, 12:00 pm (noon) *****
- PART II** ***THE MORAL AGENT: VALUES, DUTIES, & FREEDOM***
- WEEK 7** *What is morality?*
- Oct. 8, 2019 Finding Moral Arguments
- Case Studies – Video material provided in class
- Oct. 10, 2019 Is Morality Relative?
- Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal” (Excerpt) (SAKAI)
 - J. L. Mackie, *Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong* (Excerpt) (SAKAI)
- WEEK 8** *Should I do what makes me happy?*
- Oct. 15, 2019 Aristotle on Human Flourishing
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (Excerpt) (IP 607-612, until “.....”)
- Oct. 17, 2019 Aristotle and Hume on Human Virtues
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.13, Book II (Excerpt) (IP 612-617, from “.....” until the end of the paragraph in the second column)
 - Hume, *Treatise of the Human Mind*, Books II.3 and III.1-2 (SAKAI)
- ** REFLECTION STATEMENT 3 is due Fri., Oct. 18, 6:00 pm ****
- SPRING BREAK** Oct. 22-24, 2019
- WEEK 9** *Should I do what is right?*
- Oct. 29, 2019 Kant on Human Action and Intention
- Kant, *Groundwork I* (IP 583-586)
- Oct. 31, 2019 Kant on Duty and the Moral Law
- Kant, *Groundwork II* (IP 586-593, until the end of the page)
- ** REFLECTION STATEMENT 4 is due Fri., Nov. 1, 6:00 pm ****
- WEEK 10** *Should I do what is best for all?*
- Nov. 5, 2019 Mill’s Utilitarianism
- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chs. 1-2 (IP 532-540)

- Nov. 7, 2019 Critique of Utilitarianism / Wrap-Up Session *Part II: Ethics*
- Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Excerpt) (SAKAI)
 - Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (Excerpt) (SAKAI)
- *** SECOND SHORT PAPER is due Mon., Nov. 11, 12:00 pm (noon) ***
- WEEK 11** *DEBATE WEEK: How can I resolve a Moral Dilemma?*
- Nov. 12, 2019 Preparing the Debates
- Debate Group 1:** Is Taking Life Immoral?
- Judith Jarvis Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion" (IP 685-695)
 - Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" (SAKAI)
- Debate Group 2:** How Much Life Can I Save?
- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (IP 575-582)
 - Onora O'Neill, "The Moral Perplexity of Famine and World Hunger" (SAKAI)
- Nov. 14, 2019 Debate Session
- ***Debate 1***: Is Taking Life Immoral?
- ***Debate 2***: How Much Life Can I Save?
- WEEK 12** *Am I free?*
- Nov. 19, 2019 Freedom and Determinism
- Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will" (Excerpt) (SAKAI)
- Nov. 21, 2019 Freedom and Responsibility
- Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person" (IP 491-499)
- ** REFLECTION STATEMENT 5 is due Fri., Nov. 22, 6:00 pm **
- PART III** **HUMANITY AND SOCIETY**
- WEEK 13** *How can we alleviate the human condition?*
- Nov. 26, 2019 Human Nature and Enhancement
- Allen Buchanan, "Human Nature and Enhancement" (SAKAI)
- Nov. 28, 2019 *No class: Thanksgiving*
- *** Draft of Term Paper is due Monday, Dec. 2. (optional) ***
- WEEK 14** *What matters for our social identity?*
- Dec. 3, 2019 (What) Is Race? (What) Is Gender?
- Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What Are They)? (What) Do We want them to be?" (SAKAI)

Dec. 5, 2019 Preparation of the Debates
No meeting held

**** REFLECTION STATEMENT 6 (optional) is due Fri., Dec. 6, 6:00 pm ****

WEEK 15 *What is the human being?*

Dec. 10, 2019 Debate Session

Debate 3: Should There Be Limits To Human Enhancement?

Debate 4: Is Our Gender Identity a Result of Nature or of Nurture?

Dec. 12, 2019 Wrapping Up

- *No reading assignment*

***** TERM PAPER is due Monday, December 16, 10:30 pm *****