

# SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND IDENTITY

University of Notre Dame

SPRING 2020



Sonia Delaunay,  
*Rythme* (1938)  
Musée National d'Art Modern, Paris

Notre Dame, Spring 2020

## Course Description

*Who am I? How did I become the person I am now? Who am I trying to be?* – These are fundamental questions that we all ask ourselves from time to time, such as in moments of decision, reflection, or crisis. This seminar invites all participants to reflect on these questions by engaging in a dialogue with major figures in the history of philosophy as well as with contemporary philosophers. We will study texts by Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Rousseau, and Sartre, among others, as well as from Christine Korsgaard, Charles Taylor, Sally Haslanger, and Anthony Appiah. These authors will help us understand the intricate relationship between knowing myself, making up my mind, developing my character, and leading a fulfilling life. We will delve in particular into questions of experience and self-knowledge (Part I), decision-making and commitment (Part II), self-fulfillment (Part III), as well as social identity and recognition (Part IV). Emphasis will be placed on attentive reading of seminal texts and on developing and exercising a discussion culture in the classroom and a writing culture outside the classroom.

## Gateway Seminar: PHIL 30304 - 02

Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00 – 3:15 pm  
Place: DeBartolo Hall 206  
Instructor: Prof. Katharina Kraus  
E-mail: [kkraus2@nd.edu](mailto:kkraus2@nd.edu)  
Office: Malloy Hall 309  
Office hour: Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:30 pm (and by appointment)

## SAKAI:

Course-related material, such as readings, handouts, assignment prompts, will be made available on the SAKAI portal. Make sure that you have joined the course page and that you adjust your settings to receive notifications and messages. Important updates will be posted on the course page and emailed via 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 and views;
- Communicating views effectively in fruitful discussions;
- Clear argumentative writing;
- Contributing to group learning by engaging in group activities;
- Understanding significant themes in philosophy of mind and action, and being able to relate them to contemporary, real-life issues.

## Policies and expectations

Gateway seminars are designed as discussion-based seminars. Your **preparation** includes 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. All readings and assignments are intended as a springboard for your own independent and hopefully rewarding exploration of the topic.

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

Make sure to **plan your time and workload** wisely over the course of the semester and that you turn in all assignments on time. **Late work** may be accepted in exceptional cases, only if you have discussed it with me at least a week in advance of the due date; otherwise there will be penalties.

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).

# SCHEDULE

Note that this is a tentative schedule that may be changed depending on the interests the group develops during the semester! Texts marked with '\*' are optional.

## **WEEK 1**      *Introduction to the Course*

Jan. 14, 2020      Introduction

## Jan. 16, 2020      *Self-Awakening & Self-Oblivion*

- Augustine, *Confessions*, Ch. 1 ('Early Years')

## **PART I**      **EXPERIENCE & SELF-KNOWLEDGE**

### **WEEK 2**      *Subjective Character of Experience & Self-Consciousness*

Jan. 21, 2020

- T. Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?'

Jan. 23, 2020

- T. Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?' (cont.)
- Descartes, *Second Meditation*

### **WEEK 3**      *First-Personal Self-Knowledge*

Jan. 28, 2020

- A. Coliva, 'Varieties of Self-Knowledge'

Jan. 30, 2020

- A. Coliva, 'Varieties of Self-Knowledge' (cont.)
- R. Moran, 'Making Up Your Mind: Self-Interpretation and Self-Constitution' (Excerpt)

### **WEEK 4**      *Memory & Self-Interpretation*

Feb. 4, 2020

- Augustine, *Confessions*, Ch. 10 ('Memory', Excerpt)
- R. Moran, 'Making Up Your Mind: Self-Interpretation and Self-Constitution' (cont.)
- Proust, *Search of Lost Time* (Excerpt)\*

Feb. 6, 2020

- ❖ Writing Workshop

❖ **FIRST SHORT PAPER is due on Mon., Feb. 10, 6:00 pm**

## **PART II**      **AGENCY & IDENTITY**

### **WEEK 5**      *Rationality & Self-Constitution*

Feb. 11, 2020

- C. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution* Ch. 1 ('Agency and Identity')

Feb. 13, 2020 Ch. 6 ('Expulsion from the Garden: The Transition to Humanity', Excerpt)  
• C. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*  
Ch. 7 ('The Constitutional Model', Excerpt)

**WEEK 6** *Transformative Experience & Personal Identity*

Feb. 18, 2020  
• L.A. Paul, *Transformative Experience*  
Ch. 1 ('Becoming a Vampire')  
Ch. 2 ('Transformative Choice')

Feb. 20, 2020  
• L.A. Paul, *Transformative Experience* (cont.)

**WEEK 7** *Identity & Commitment*

Feb. 25, 2020  
• H. Frankfurt, 'Identification and Wholeheartedness'  
❖ Group Activity Workshop

Feb. 27, 2020 Class cancelled due to *APA Central Division Meeting* in Chicago

❖ **SECOND SHORT PAPER is due on Mon., Mar. 2, 6:00 pm**

**PART III** **SELF-FULFILLMENT**

**WEEK 8** *Human Flourishing*

Mar. 3, 2020  
• Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk I.1, 5, 7, 9 & 10 (Excerpts)

Mar. 5, 2020  
• Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (cont.) + Bk. I.13, Bk. II.1-2

**SPRING BREAK** Mar. 10-12, 2020

**WEEK 9** *Seeking God*

Mar. 17, 2020  
• Augustine, *Confessions*, Ch. 10 (complete)  
• St. Teresa of Avila, *The Inner Castle*, Ch. 1

Mar. 19, 2020  
• Augustine & Teresa (cont.)

**WEEK 10** *Existential Freedom*

Mar. 24, 2020  
• J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*

Mar. 26, 2020  
• J.-P. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (cont.)

**WEEK 11**      *Seeking Meaning*

Mar. 31, 2020

- V. Frankl, *The Search for Meaning*  
Ch. 2 ('Logotherapy in a Nutshell')

Apr. 2, 2020

- V. Frankl, *The Search for Meaning* (cont.)

**PART IV**      **SELF IN SOCIETY**

**WEEK 12**      *Education & the Formation of Identity in Society*

Apr. 7, 2020

- J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile, or on Education* (Excerpt)

Apr. 9, 2020

- C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Ch. 3 ('Source of Authenticity')
- J.-J. Rousseau, *Second Discourse on Inequality*, Part II (Excerpt)\*

❖ **OUTLINE and ABSTRACT OF TERM PAPER is due on April 15, 6:00 pm**

**WEEK 13**      *Social Identities: Gender & Race*

Apr. 14, 2020

- S. Haslanger, 'Gender and Race: (What Are They)? (What) Do We want them to be?'

Apr. 16, 2020

- A. Appiah, 'Racism'

**WEEK 14**

Apr. 21, 2020      *Identity & Recognition*

- C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition' (Excerpt)

Apr. 23, 2020

- A. Appiah, *The Lies That Bind Us: Rethinking Identity*,  
Ch. 1 ('Classification')\*

❖ **DRAFT OF TERM PAPER is due on April 24, 6:00 pm**

**WEEK 15**      *Becoming Who You Are*

Apr. 28, 2020      Wrap-Up Session

- *No reading assignment*

❖ **TERM PAPER is due on Thursday, May 7, 10:30 am.**

**Required Texts:**

- For the mandatory readings assigned to each session, please consult the **schedule**.
- All texts will be made available through **SAKAI**.

## REQUIREMENTS:

- **Class participation** (*letter grade*): **20 %**
- **Reading Questions** (*2-point scale*): **20%**
- **Group Presentation** (*10-point scale*): **10%**
- **2 Short Papers** (about 1000 words) (*letter grade*): **20%** (10% each)
- **1 Term Paper** (about 2500 words) (*letter grade*): **30 %**

In this class, you will be able to collect a total amount of **100 points**. A 100-point scale will be used to assign letter grades (see below for the grading scheme).

## ASSIGNMENTS:

### ASSIGNMENT 1: *READING QUESTIONS* (20 p)

Each **Monday evening (by 8:00 pm)**, you should submit a question about the readings (for **Tuesday's** meeting) via SAKAI. We will use these questions to structure our group discussions. You will receive two points (2 p) for an excellent example of a strong question, one point (1 p) for a reasonably good question and no points (0 p) if you do not submit a question at all or if you submit a question that is not relevant to the topic of the day. I will count the top ten submissions.

### ASSIGNMENT 2: *SHORT PAPERS* (20 p in total; 10 p each)

At the end of each Part I and II, you will be expected to write a short paper of about **1000 words**, in which you respond to a prompt. The paper should be handed in as a Word document (*.doc* or *.docx*; *Times New Roman, 12 pt., 1.5 spacing*; *Filename: YOUR\_NAME\_PAPER\_No.doc(x)*) and uploaded on SAKAI (assignment function) by **6:00 pm on Monday, February 10 and March 2** (see schedule).

The goal of the short papers is to critically discuss the philosophical accounts covered in the unit and to argue convincingly for a position with respect to a particular issue. The grade will be based on the plausibility of the proposed position, the strength of the argument, accurate engagement with the readings, and an engaging writing style. Further guidance will be provided along the way.

### ASSIGNMENT 3: *GROUP PRESENTATION* (10 p)

For Part III, you will work in groups to prepare a presentation of a theory of self-fulfillment. You will be asked to translate the theory into a **concrete life example**. You may be inspired by the biography of a real person (e.g., a saint, a religious or political leader, a scientist, a philosopher or writer, etc.) or with a fictional character (e.g., from a novel or movie). You will prepare a **presentation of about 20 minutes** for the **Thursday** session of the week in which the theory you have chosen will be discussed. In this presentation, you (i.e., *all group members*) will present your example and explain how the person's life is guided by, has realized, or perhaps has failed to realize, the kind of self-fulfillment described in your theory. You will then lead a **discussion of approximately 20 minutes** with the entire class.

There will be a grade for all group members based on the plausibility and philosophical relevance of the example, the clarity and accuracy of the philosophical account, and an engaging presentation and discussion style. Further directions will be provided along the way.

## ASSIGNMENT 4: *TERM PAPER* (30 p)

At the end of the course, you will be expected to write a term paper of about **2500 words** in which you examine in depth an issue relevant to self-knowledge and identity. You are asked to argue convincingly for a philosophical position and apply this position to a real-life issue. A set of possible questions will be provided. You may formulate your own question, but you should seek my approval before working on it.

As we work toward mastery of clear, argumentative writing in this seminar, this assignment will be due in three stages, and I will provide feedback along the way and may ask you to revise your outlines and drafts several times.

You will be asked to submit an **abstract and outline** of your paper by **6:00 pm on Wednesday, April 15**. A **first draft** of the paper should be submitted by **6:00 pm on Friday, April 24**. Finally, you are expected to submit the **term paper** as a Word document (.doc or .docx; Times New Roman, 12 pt., 1.5 spaces, file name: YOUR\_NAME\_TERMPAPER.doc(x)) via SAKAI (assignment function) by **10:30 a.m. Thursday, May 7** (exam date)).

Only the term paper will be graded on the following criteria: Coherence of position, strength of argument, appropriate use of relevant primary texts, clarity of structure, and correctness of form. Further guidance will be provided as the paper progresses.

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

## 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

