

**Philosophy and Human Existence**  
**Fall 2009 – Sections 1 and 2**

PHI BC 1003-001  
MW 1:10pm-2:25pm, 328 Milbank

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Milbank 326E  
212-854-2047

PHI BC 1003-002  
MW 2:40pm-3:55pm, 324 Milbank

**Course description:**

This course is an introduction to problems and methods from the Western philosophical tradition. We will investigate three central questions of fundamental human concern from three areas of philosophy: the Philosophy of Religion, the Philosophy of Mind, and Metaphysics. The course is organized around the following questions.

(1) Does God exist? (2) Who am I? (3) Do we have free will?

The point is not necessarily to answer the questions addressed, but rather to understand and to critically evaluate the traditional philosophical responses, as well as to learn to formulate your own conception of these issues using philosophical methods of argumentation. The main objective of this course is to learn how to present coherent and persuasive philosophical arguments while demonstrating an awareness of the theoretical framework underlying your position.

**Required texts:**

- [B] Andrew Bailey, ed., *First Philosophy: Fundamental Problems and Readings in Philosophy*, Volume III: *God, Mind, and Freedom* (Broadview Press, 2004) ISBN 1-55111-659-6
- [KL] Lowell Kleiman and Stephen Lewis, eds., *Philosophy: An Introduction Through Literature* (Paragon House, 1992) ISBN 1-55778-539-2

These books are available at Book Culture, 536 West 112th Street near Broadway.  
212-865-1588

## Requirements and grading:

- A short (300 word) paper, an outline/statement of purpose posted online, a longer (1500 word) paper, a midterm and a final exam.
- You may also hand in a second short paper – this is optional and not graded.
- The outline/statement of purpose which you are to post on line is required. It is not graded, but if it is not done on time, your longer paper will not be accepted.
- The on-line discussion forum can be accessed on the course webpage via CourseWorks, <<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/>>. You are required to post at least three messages during each month.
  
- **No late assignments will be accepted.** Assigned work is due at the beginning of class on the due date. Be sure to keep a hard copy of all your written work! **There will be no make up exams**, except for well-documented *bona fide* emergencies. In that case, exams will not necessarily share the format of those given to the class. Any emergencies should be discussed with me as soon as is practically possible.
  
- You are expected to come prepared to all classes. This means that you should read the assigned articles *before* the lecture for which they are assigned. Though many of the readings are short, they require careful study. *Read them more than once*, noting your questions and comments as you do so.
  
- Class lectures will often contain material not in the readings. You are responsible for the content of both the lectures and the readings.
  
- Proofread your papers. It is your responsibility to correct errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you have questions concerning appropriate grammar or style, consult a handbook such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*. You are strongly encouraged to visit The Writing Centers in Barnard Hall and Philosophy Hall.
  
- Be sure to acknowledge all ideas and words not your own with appropriate citations of the original sources. **All violations of academic integrity will be dealt with in strict accordance with college and university policies.**

## Course Syllabus

(Readings may be amended, as time and interest permit.)

### Introduction and course overview

- [B] Chapter 1, “Philosophy”.  
You are expected to be thoroughly familiar with these suggestions for reading and writing philosophy.

### I. Does God exist? Reason and Religious Belief.

Classical arguments for existence of God

- [B] Aquinas, Part I, Question 2, from *Summa Theologiae*  
[KL] S. Clarke, “A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument”  
[KL] W. Paley, “The Argument from Design”  
  
[KL] Hume, “Reply to the Argument from Design”  
[B] Hume, VII-IX of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*  
  
[B] Anselm, “The Ontological Argument”, from *Proslogion*  
[B] Gaunilo, “On Behalf of the Fool”  
[B] Anselm, *Reply to Gaunilo*  
[KL] Norman Malcolm, “Anselm’s Ontological Argument”

The problem of evil

- [KL] Mark Twain, from *Little Bessie*  
[KL] from the *Book of Job*  
[B] Hume, Parts X and XI of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*  
[KL] John Hick, “The Problem of Evil”  
[B] J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”

### II. Who am I? The Philosophy of Mind.

The Mind-Body Problem

- [KL] Descartes, Meditations I and II from *Meditations on First Philosophy*  
[B] Gilbert Ryle, from *The Concept of Mind*, “Descartes’ Myth”  
[B] Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”  
Raymond Smullyan, “An Epistemological Nightmare”, on CourseWorks

## Personal Identity

- [KL] Franz Kafka “The Metamorphosis”
- [KL] Plato, from *Phaedo*
- [KL] Locke, “The Prince and the Cobbler”
- [KL] Hume, “Of Personal Identity”
- Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?”, on CourseWorks

### **III. Do we have free will? Determinism, Free Will, and Responsibility.**

#### Free Will and Determinism

- [KL] Aristotle, “The Sea Battle”
- [KL] Gilbert Ryle, “It Was To Be”
- [KL] Richard Taylor, “Fate”
  
- [KL] Baron d’Holbach, “Are We Cogs in the Universe?”
- [KL] Moritz Schlick, “The Free Will – Determinism Issue is a Pseudoproblem”
- [KL] C.A. Campbell, “Is ‘Free Will’ a Pseudoproblem?”
  
- [B] C.A. Campbell, “Has the Self Free Will”, from *On Selfhood and Godhood*

#### Moral Responsibility

- [B] P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”
- [KL] John Hospers, “Meaning and Free Will”
- Galen Strawson, interview on Moral Responsibility, on CourseWorks