

Methods and Problems of Philosophy

UN1010
(Fall 2020)

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Office Hour: By appointment.
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This course, which will be taught online on Zoom, is intended as an introduction to Philosophy, covering a range of fundamental topics, with readings both historical and contemporary. Unlike the History of Philosophy course sequence, this course is NOT focused on textual exegesis of the readings. Rather, the readings are merely a stimulus to reflect on (and discuss in class) the philosophical topics and questions for which they are assigned so as to come to some understanding of the 'methods and problems of Philosophy'. As a result, students simply cannot afford to miss any classes since the real substance of the class will be in the lectures and the discussions.

Though it is expected that Freshmen and Sophomores will be the majority of students, more senior students are welcome to enroll.

It is primarily a lecture course, but student participation is much encouraged and most welcome.

After roughly every five classes, a class will be devoted to a revision session with the Teaching Assistants.

Some foreign students, stuck in distant overseas sites, may not be able to attend the classes as they occur online. They can view the recorded version of the classes on Zoom. Since those students will not be able to participate in class discussion, if they have any questions about the material traversed in class, they should send the TAs their queries, which will be addressed by the TAs in the revision sessions or in their office hours. (The TAs will do their best try to hold their revision sessions or their office hours at times when the overseas students are able to attend them online.) Students can also write to me or seek an office session with me.

Requirements:

1) Strictly regular attendance.

2) One mid-term and one final examination.

Each exam will be assessed for 50% of the overall grade assessment.

Topics and Readings

Here below is a breakdown of topics and readings. (*All* readings will be available on Canvas Courseworks. I may change the order in which we cover the topics as the class proceeds. For each topic, I will mention some supplementary readings during my lectures that students with a special interest in one or other topic might want to read, but the readings below are compulsory for all students.)

1. Are Values Objective?

Readings: Sartre, Williams, Hume, Hare, Moore, McDowell.

2. Freedom and Determinism

Readings: Campbell, Holbach, Hume, Strawson.

3. Scepticism

Readings: Descartes, Two selections from Hume, Stroud.

4. The Mind-Body Problem

Readings: Descartes, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Armstrong, Davidson.

5. Political Liberty

Readings: Mill, Rawls, Berlin, Williams

6. Meaning

Reading: Grice