

PHLA10: Reason and Truth

Professor: Dr. Dustin Stokes
Section: PHLA10H3 F
Lectures TU/TH 11-12 AC223
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Course description

This course provides an introductory survey of core issues in philosophy. We focus on two types of questions: *metaphysical* questions and *epistemological* questions. Metaphysics concerns what exists or reality (TRUTH); epistemology concerns what and how we know things (REASON). The course divides into four units: Units 1-3 focus primarily on metaphysics, and unit 4 primarily on epistemology (though there will be overlap throughout).

- 1) *Existence of god*: Whether God exists is not, many philosophers think, a question answered straightforwardly by science; it is a *metaphysical* question. Traditionally, philosophers have given a range of arguments that aim to prove the existence of God (or, in some cases, the non-existence of God).
- 2) *The problem of free will*: If we live in a deterministic world, where past events and the laws of nature determine all future events, then our present and future actions are determined. On the face of it, this is inconsistent with our actions being ones that we freely choose. Metaphysicians thus struggle with how to reconcile a (largely) deterministic world with the intuition that we have free will.
- 3) *Philosophy of mind and persons*: What features of you are essential to you? In virtue of what—your mind, your body, your brain—are you the same person as some person one week ago, one year ago, 10 years ago? What must survive in order for *you* to survive? What is the relation between mind and body? Is the mind distinct from the physical body? Identical? Or related in some other way?
- 4) *Belief, reason, and knowledge*: Epistemological questions concern the nature of knowledge. This may be best understood by considering threats to our knowledge: how do you know the external world exists? How can you be sure that the world is as it appears to you? What reasons do you, and scientists, have for making generalizations about the world based on a limited, finite set of observations? In answering these questions, epistemologists analyze concepts like *knowledge*, *reason*, and *evidence*.

Course materials:

All course materials are available online via the course blackboard site. ALL readings will be online. Lecture notes, essay assignments, announcements, and other information will also be made available on this site. The portal may be accessed via: <https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> (You must login using your UTORid and password.)

Evaluation:

5%	Tutorial Participation	
7.5%	Argument summary	DUE: See below
7.5%	Argument summary	DUE: See below
20%	Short essay 1	DUE: Thu 22 Oct (questions assigned 15 Oct)
20%	Short essay 2	DUE: Thu 19 Nov (questions assigned 12 Nov)
40%	Final exam	DATE TBA

Argument summaries:

The argument summaries are short papers that require a brief (2 pages or less) clarification of the argument from one of our readings. The topics will be distributed in your tutorial sections one week, and the papers submitted in tutorial the following week. You must submit **two** argument summaries in the term, one during Unit 1 and then one during Unit 2 *or* Unit 3 *or* Unit 4 (your choice). In other words, you must submit the first argument summary and then must submit whichever (but only one) of the second, third or fourth argument summaries. You are **not** allowed to submit more than two argument summaries in the term. The weeks for submitting the argument summaries are as follows:

*Week 4:	28 Sept-2 Oct. (UNIT 1)	(assigned in tutorial, Week 3)
Week 6:	12-16 Oct. (UNIT 2)	(assigned in tutorial, Week 5)
Week 9:	2-6 Nov. (UNIT 3)	(assigned in tutorial, Week 8)
Week 12:	23-27 Nov. (UNIT 4)	(assigned in tutorial, Week 11)

*All students must submit the Week 4 argument summary.

Short essays:

The short essays work as follows. You will be given a short list of questions, from which you will choose and respond to one. The questions will be distributed in lecture, and the papers are to be submitted the following week at the start of lecture. Your responses should be concise and to the point, and should be between 750-1250 words (3-5 pages).

Final exam:

The final exam will be comprehensive and essay-style, but like the short papers, you will have choices between questions. The date of the exam will be announced by the university later in the term.

Tutorials:

You registered for a tutorial section when registering for this class. Attendance and participation in tutorials is important for your success in this class, since it provides an opportunity to discuss the issues covered in readings and lectures. NOTE: 5% of your total course mark is determined by tutorial participation. So you must attend the tutorial section for which you are registered. **Tutorials begin in Week 2** (14-18 Sept).

Email policy:

I will respond only to emails sent from your UT email address. I will *not* respond to inquiries about information that can be easily found on the course blackboard website. Inquiries about marked coursework should be directed to your TA. Philosophical questions about course material are best handled during office hours (and not by email).

General:

Lecture notes will be posted online **after** lecture (without images, etc.)

This is a writing intensive course. All of the work/examinations will be written. Your papers will be graded not only on content, but also on grammar, writing mechanics, style,

etc. The UTSC writing centre can be found online here:
<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/~ctl/twc/index.html>

I also recommend this for writing philosophy papers:
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Plagiarism and academic offenses of any kind will not be tolerated. You should familiarize yourself with the university guidelines and policies on academic integrity: <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>

Late work/exams are allowed only with the submission of an official University of Toronto Medical Certificate or a letter from your registrar (or other university authority). **Unexcused late work will NOT be accepted.** No exceptions.

If you require special test-taking or note-taking accommodations, please see me.

(Tentative) Reading/discussion schedule:

Thu 10/9 *Introduction*

Tue 15/9 *Logic and critical thinking primer*

UNIT 1: THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Thu 17/9 *Existence of God: Issues and arguments*

Tue 22/9 *The ontological argument*

Read: Anselm, 'The Ontological Argument-Proslogion'

Thu 24/9 *The argument from design*

Read: Paley, Excerpts from *Natural Theology*

Tue 29/9 *The problem of evil*

Read: Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence'

Thu 1/10 *The rationality of religious belief*

Read: Pascal, 'The Wager'

James, Excerpts from *The will to believe*

UNIT 2: THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL

Tue 6/10 *Determinism and incompatibility with free will*

Thu 8/10 *Soft determinism/Compatibilism*

Read: Ayer, 'Freedom and Necessity'

Tue 13/10 *Libertarianism/Incompatibilism*

Read: Chisholm, 'Human freedom and the self'

Thu 15/10 *Freedom and persons*

Read: Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the will and the concept of a person'

UNIT 3: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND AND PERSONS

Tue 20/10 *Identity of objects and persons*

Thu 22/10 *The psychological continuity theory*

Read: Locke, 'Of Identity and Diversity'

Tue 27/10 *The psychological continuity theory continued*

Read: Reid, 'Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity'

Thu 29/10 *The mind/body problem*

Read: Descartes, Meditation II & VI and excerpts from *The Passions of the Soul*

- Tue 3/11 *Dualism: Mind as immaterial soul*
 Thu 5/11 *Materialism: Mind as brain*
 Read: Smart, 'Sensations and brain processes'
- Tue 10/11 *Functionalism: Mind as Computer*
 Read: Putnam, 'The nature of mental states'
- Thu 12/11 *The hard problem of consciousness*
 Read: Chalmers, 'The puzzle of conscious experience'
- UNIT 4: BELIEF, REASON, AND KNOWLEDGE**
- Tue 17/11 *The Cartesian project and scepticism*
 Read: Descartes Meditations I & II
- Thu 19/11 *The concept of knowledge*
- Tue 24/11 *Foundations and the regress problem*
 Read: BonJour, 'The regress problem and foundationalism'
- Thu 26/11 *Induction and science*
 Read: Hume, Excerpts from *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
 Russell, 'On induction'
- Tue 1/12 *Induction and science continued*

Resources:

All of the readings will be primary sources. This material will be challenging. You might find some of the following resources helpful.

-For general philosophy resources, I suggest both *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Audi, R. (1999) and *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Blackburn, S. (1994). Online, try the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

-For an introductory text on philosophy of religion, see Rowe, W. L. *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction* (Wadsworth Publishing: 2005)

-For an introductory text on free will, see Kane, R. *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, (Oxford University Press: 2005). (Available in electronic format through UT libraries)

-For an introductory text on personal identity, try Noonan, H. *Personal Identity* (Routledge 2003). For introductory texts on philosophy of mind, try Kim, J., *Philosophy of Mind*, Second Edition (Westview Press: 2005) or Heil, J., *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge: 2004). (All of these texts are available through UT libraries, and the Noonan and Heil are available electronically.)

-For good introductory books on theories of knowledge and epistemology, try Williams, M., *Problems of Knowledge* (Oxford University Press: 2001) or BonJour, L., *Epistemology* (Rowman and Littlefield: 2002)