

# **Philosophy 100: *Introduction to Philosophy***

Ned Markosian  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Massachusetts – Amherst  
markosian@umass.edu  
Fall 2019

**Lectures:** TuTh 11:30-12:20, Herter Hall 227.

**Professor Markosian's Office:** South College E421.

**Professor Markosian's Office Hours:** Tue 2:00-3:00, Thur 1:00-2:00.

**Discussion Sections:** various times on Fridays.

## **Teaching Assistants:**

- Mr. Macías Bustos (mmaciasbusto@umass.edu). Office: South College E316. Office hours: Wed 1:00-3:00.
- Ms. Samaram (msamaram@umass.edu). Office: South College E318. Office hours: Tue 2:00-3:00, Thur 2:00-3:00.
- Mr. Wright (johnwright@umass.edu). Office: South College E416. Office hours: Thur 1:00-3:00.

**What are office hours?** Office hours are designated times when your TA or your professor will be in their office, available to meet with students. There is no need to make an appointment if you would like to meet with your TA or your professor during these times – you can just drop in. (If you would like to meet with one of us, but prefer a time outside of our office hours, you can email to make an appointment.) It is usually a good idea to visit your professor and your TA during their office hours at least occasionally, either to chat in general or to ask specific questions related to the class.

## **Course Overview**

This course is an introduction to some of the most perplexing topics that have preoccupied humans for thousands of years, as well as an introduction to a distinctive way of thinking – a way of thinking that focuses on carefully presenting and evaluating arguments. No background is assumed or required.

By the end of the course, I hope that each of you will think of yourself as a philosopher – as someone who thinks hard about philosophical questions, using philosophical methods, at least some of the time. Thinking about such questions, and using such methods, will make your life better in a wide variety of ways. Some of these ways are mundane and practical. (Thinking like a philosopher will help you with your writing, critical thinking, and communicating, which in turn will help you perform better in almost any career; and it will also help you to get better scores on the GRE, LSAT, MCAT, and GMAT.) And some of the ways in which thinking like a philosopher will make your life better are deeper and harder to measure. (Thinking like a philosopher will help you work through issues about what is meaningful and valuable, for example, and who you are, and how you should live your life.)

The course will cover topics in Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, Philosophical Theology, and Moral Philosophy. We will focus especially on the following questions: What can I know about the external world? What exactly am I – do I have an immaterial soul, or am I purely physical? Do I have free will? Is there a God? What makes right actions right? Does any of this matter?

The aim of the course will be to educate students about some of the main issues, theses, and arguments concerning these topics, so that the students may arrive at their own considered opinions on these matters.

## **Learning Outcomes**

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Read complicated texts, extract the arguments contained in those texts, and articulate the best objections to those arguments.
- Develop arguments of your own for your core beliefs.
- Write clear, concise, and persuasive essays.
- Articulate and defend your own views on a wide range of philosophical topics.

## **Course Requirements**

- ❖ **Five Short Papers** (each worth 5% of final grade)
- ❖ **Midterm Exam** (worth 35% of final grade)

- ❖ **Final Exam** (worth 40% of final grade)

## Required Readings

- "On Arguments" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two More Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Theism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Atheism" (handout available on course website).
- Driver, Julia, "[The History of Utilitarianism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Griffith, Meghan, *Free Will: The Basics* (Routledge, 2013). (This is the one and only text you will have to buy for this class.)
- Markosian, Ned, "[Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain in a Vat?](#)," *Logos and Episteme* **V** (2014), pp. 161-181.
- Markosian, Ned, "[Rossian Minimalism](#)," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* **4** (2009), pp. 1-16.
- Shapiro, Lisa, "[Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Street, Sharon, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?" in Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, and Seana Shiffrin, *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* (Norton, 2015), pp. 685-693.
- Vogt, Katja, "[Ancient Skepticism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## Recommended Readings

- Onscreen Document (a regularly updated Word document with arguments, definitions, etc., that are displayed during class; available on the course website).
- Cajete, Gregory, "Philosophy of Native Science," in Anne Waters (ed.), *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003)
- Copenhaver, Rebecca, "[Reid on Memory and Personal Identity](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

- Fara, Delia Graff, "Shifting Sands: An Interest-Relative Theory of Vagueness," *Philosophical Topics* 28 (2000), pp. 45-81.
- Fields, Keota, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lexington Books, 2011).
- Fields, Keota, "Review of Samuel Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism*," *Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (2013), pp. 170-172.
- Gettier, Edmund, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963), pp. 121-123.
- Gracia, Jorge, and Vargas, Manuel, "[Latin American Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Gyekye, Kwame, "[African Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Haslanger, Sally, and Sveinsdóttir, Ásta Kristjana, "[Feminist Metaphysics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind, "[Virtue Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Levin, Janet, "[Functionalism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Lewis, David, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13 (1976), pp. 145-152.
- Markosian, Ned, "A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80 (1999), pp. 257-277.
- Melton, Desirée, "The Vulnerable Self: Enabling the Recognition of Racial Inequality," in Lisa Tessman (ed.), *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal* (Springer, 2009), pp. 149-164.
- Mills, Charles, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Cornell, 1998).
- Nelkin, Dana Kay, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
- Outlaw, Lucious T., "[Africana Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Phillips, Stephen, "[Epistemology in Classical Indian Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Tong, Rosemarie, and Williams, Nancy, "[Feminist Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Vihvelin, Kadri, "[Arguments for Incompatibilism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

- Waters, Anne (ed.), *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).
- Wong, David, "[Chinese Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

## About Short Papers

Details about the individual short paper assignments can be found below.

Each short paper is due at midnight on the relevant day. (See the schedule below for specific due dates.) *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* Any paper turned in after the deadline will be considered late. Late papers will be penalized 10 points (out of 100). Late papers can be turned in until the beginning of the next lecture, but will not be accepted after that.

## About Exams

There will be two exams for this course – a Midterm and a Final. For each exam, I will post five or six essay questions on the course website about a week beforehand, and on the day of the exam, you will have to answer one of those questions, which will be chosen for you. The exam questions will be designed to test your knowledge of both the readings and the lectures, as well as your ability to criticize the views and evaluate the arguments that we have studied.

It may be possible to reschedule an exam, but only if you have a legitimate reason to do so *and* make arrangements with Prof. Markosian prior to the originally scheduled time for the exam. If you miss an exam without making arrangements in advance to reschedule the exam, you will receive a zero on that exam.

## Short Paper Assignments

- ❖ **First short paper assignment:** Write a 3-page paper in which you present, explain, and evaluate The Brain in a Vat Argument. (Three pages is the maximum. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* You should also bring a copy of your paper (or an electronic version) to the next day's discussion section.)
- ❖ **Second short paper assignment:** Write a 3-page paper in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view about whether human people have souls, and (ii)

present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (Three pages is the maximum. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* You should also bring a copy of your paper (or an electronic version) to the next day's discussion section.)

- ❖ **Third short paper assignment:** Write a 3-page paper in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view in response to The Problem of Freedom and Determinism, and (ii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (Three pages is the maximum. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* You should also bring a copy of your paper (or an electronic version) to the next day's discussion section.)
  
- ❖ **Fourth short paper assignment:** Write a 3-page paper in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view about whether there is a God, and (ii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (Three pages is the maximum. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* You should also bring a copy of your paper (or an electronic version) to the next day's discussion section.)
  
- ❖ **Fifth short paper assignment:** Write a 3-page paper in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite ethical theory, and (ii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that theory. ((Three pages is the maximum. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* You should also bring a copy of your paper (or an electronic version) to the next day's discussion section.)

## A Word About Discussions

Philosophical discussions (whether in discussion sections, after a talk, or in informal settings) can vary along a number of different dimensions. One of these is a spectrum that ranges from (a) a competitive, zero-sum game that involves scoring points and trying to appear smart, on one end, to (b) a co-operative and fun activity aimed at discovering and solving philosophical problems, on the other end. In general, the closer a discussion is to the co-operative end of this spectrum, the better it will be – better because it produces better philosophy, and better also because it is more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Here are some rules designed to keep us on the right end of this spectrum.

- Don't be mean.
- Never interrupt.
- Don't bogart the discussion. In fact, do the opposite: actively work to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to talk.
- Think in terms of abstract ideas that, once expressed, are on their own, rather than ideas that belong to a particular person.
- Think of your job as trying to develop those ideas, making them clearer, stronger, better.
- Try to build on the points that have been made by others, rather than tearing them down.
- Try to make connections between the point currently under consideration and previous points.
- Every once in a while during the discussion, someone should offer a big-picture comment. "So it seems to me that we were discussing X and Y. Did we ever come to any conclusion about whether X is consistent with Y?"
- If you notice someone else breaking one of the first two rules, speak up right away, even if – *especially if* – you are not the victim.

## The Philosophy 100 Finger System

The Philosophy 100 Finger System is a system for handling discussion during both lectures and discussion sections. The main purpose of the finger system is to ensure that every student has an equal chance to be called on, and also to prevent discussions from being dominated by a small handful of students.

Here's how the finger system works. If you want to make a contribution during a discussion (either in lecture or a discussion section), and if it would be your first contribution that day, then you hold up one finger. If you have been called on once and you later want to make a second contribution, you hold up two fingers; and so on.

Priority will be given to one-finger questions over two-finger questions, and so on.

Meanwhile, if you have a quick clarifying question (such as "What did you say is the rationale for the third premise?" or "Can you please scroll back up to the argument?"), then you can hold up a closed fist.

## Classroom Rules and Policies

Laptops and similar devices are permitted in class, but only for (a) taking notes or (b) viewing the readings. *If you plan to use a laptop or similar device in class, please talk to me beforehand so that you can take The Pledge* (which involves solemnly swearing to use your device only for good and never for evil).

The use of cell phones, music players, headphones, ear buds, etc. is not permitted during class.

## Schedule

Date	Topic/Written Assignment	Reading
Sep	3 Course intro	
	5 Arguments; The BIV Argument	"On Arguments"
	6 Discussion: Responses to The BIV Argument	
	10 The Problem of Skepticism	Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism"
	12 NM's solution to The Problem of Skepticism; <i>First short paper due</i>	Markosian, "Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain In a Vat?"
	13 Discussion: Responses to The Problem of Skepticism	
	17 The Mind-Body Problem	
	19 Two arguments against Materialism	"Two Arguments Against Materialism"
	20 Discussion: Responses to the two arguments	
	24 Two more arguments against Materialism	"Two More Arguments Against Materialism"
Oct	26 Interactionism; The No Interaction Argument	Shapiro, "Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia"
	27 Discussion: Objections to The No Interaction Argument	
	1 The Problem of Other Minds; A Popular Argument for Materialism	"Two Arguments for Materialism"
	3 Wrap-up of Mind-Body Problem; Midterm review; <i>Second short paper due</i>	
	4 Discussion: Student views on The Mind-Body Problem; review for Midterm	
	8 <i>Midterm Exam</i>	
	10 The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 1-2
	11 Discussion: A dilemma about free will	



	15	<i>No class</i> (Monday schedule)	
	17	Moral responsibility and alternative possibilities	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 3
	18	Discussion: The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	
	22	Compatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 4
	24	Incompatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 5
	25	Discussion: Responses to The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	
	29	Other views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 6
	31	Free will and science; <i>Third short paper due</i>	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 7-8
Nov	1	Discussion: Free Will	
	5	Intro to Philosophical Theology; cosmological arguments	
	7	Design Arguments; ontological arguments	"Two Arguments for Theism"
	8	Discussion: Arguments for Theism	
	12	Some arguments for Atheism	"Two Arguments for Atheism"
	14	Intro to ethical theory; <i>Fourth short paper due</i>	
	15	Discussion: Arguments for Theism and Atheism	
	19	Utilitarianism	Driver, "The History of Utilitarianism"
	21	Kantian ethical theories	
	22	Discussion: Utilitarian and Kantian ethical theories	
	26	<i>No class</i> (Thanksgiving break)	
	28	<i>No class</i> (Thanksgiving break)	
	29	<i>No discussion sections</i> (Thanksgiving break)	
Dec	3	Rossian ethical theories	Markosian, "Rossian Minimalism"
	5	Metaethics; <i>Fifth short paper due</i>	Street, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?"
	6	Discussion: What makes right actions right?	
	10	Course wrap-up; review for Final	
	13	<i>Final exam</i> (1:00pm)	