

Philosophy 103: Introduction to Philosophy
Rutgers University – New Brunswick
Monday, Wednesday: 12:00pm – 1:20pm
Tillett 111

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Office Hours: Monday, 2-3pm

Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy. In particular, it is an introduction to some of the central issues that have preoccupied philosophers—and non-philosophers!—for thousands of years, as well as an introduction to a distinctive way of thinking about, presenting, and criticizing arguments. No background is assumed or required.

By the end of the course, I hope each of you will think of yourself as a philosopher: as someone who can and does think about philosophical questions, using philosophical methods, at least some of the time. This, I humbly suggest, will make your life better, in a wide variety of ways—some mundane and practical (it will help you with your writing, analytic thinking, and with taking the LSAT!), some deep and harder to measure (it will help you think through what is meaningful and valuable: why are we here? What are we doing? How should we treat each other? And so on).

The course will cover topics in Epistemology, Metaphysics, Personal Identity, Moral Philosophy, and Social and Political Philosophy. We will consider philosophical discussions, from a variety of philosophical traditions, of the following questions: What should I believe? What do I know? What is there? What am I? Who am I? What can I do? Do I have free will? How should I live? What should I do? Does it matter? How should I treat other people? How should we live together?

If we do this right, it should be one of the most interesting classes you take while in college. I won't spend very much time lecturing at you, nor will I be trying to tell you *what* to think about these philosophical topics. Instead, much of our time will be spent working together to figure out *how* to think about these topics. Answers to these questions cannot simply be found in books; nor can we use scientific or other perhaps more familiar methods to help us—at least not straightforwardly. So, in class, we will be working together, often in small groups, trying to figure out how the arguments work, breaking things down, and—once things are more clearly in view—thinking about what we think about all of this.

Required Text

The Norton Introduction to Philosophy

Edited by Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, Seana Shiffrin

available via Amazon.com
(used or new is fine)

<https://www.amazon.com/Norton-Introduction-Philosophy-Gideon-Rosen/dp/0393932206>

Course Requirements

- (A) 3 Short Papers (10% each, 30% total)
 - 750-1000 words
 - details to follow in class
- (B) 5 Quizzes (8% each, 40% total)
 - multiple choice and true-false quizzes
- (C) In-Class Group and Individual Participation (30% total, roughly 1% for each day of class)
 - Attendance is necessary, but not sufficient!
 - Based on engagement and effort in argument groups (more on this in class)

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Rutgers University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity. Penalties for violations of these policies can be severe, including an automatic failing grade for the course and worse. This document provides a comprehensive overview of those policies:

https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

Accessibility

I want this class to be a great and educational experience for all of you, and all of you are entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at Rutgers.

Disabled students are encouraged to speak with me if that would be helpful and to avail themselves of the services provided by the Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Plan for Course and Readings

All readings are either in the Norton Introduction to Philosophy reader (“NR”) or are posted on Sakai on the course website.

Day	Topic	Reading
9/7	Introduction	“A Brief Guide to Logic and Argumentation” (Norton Reader “NR”)
Part I – Epistemology: What should I believe? What do I know?		
9/12	Beginning With Doubt	Rene Descartes, “Meditation I: What Can Be Called Into Doubt” <u>Meditations on First Phil</u> (NR)
9/14	Analyzing Knowledge	Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (NR) Dharmottara, examples from <u>Ascertainment of Knowledge</u> (Sakai)

9/19	Knowledge and Experience	Gregory Cajete, “Philosophy of Native Science” (from <u>American Indian Thought</u> , ed. Anne Waters, posted on Sakai)
9/21	Skepticism and Evidence	Ned Markosian, “Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain in a Vat?” (Sakai)
9/26	Knowledge and Context	Stewart Cohen, “Contextualism” (NR)
9/28	Knowledge, Standpoint, and Power	Patricia Hill Collins, <u>Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment</u> (excerpt on Sakai)
Part II – Metaphysics: What is there?		
10/3	Against Physicalism	Gideon Rosen, “Numbers and Other Immaterial Objects” (NR)
10/5	Things	Stephen Yablo, “A Thing and Its Matter” (NR)
10/10	Stuff	Shieva Kleinschmidt, “Some Things About Stuff” (Sakai)
10/12	Qualia	Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (NR)
Part III – Personal Metaphysics: What am I? Who am I? What can I do?		
10/17	Personal Identity: What am I?	Dean Zimmerman, “Material People” (Sakai)
10/19	Personal Identity: Who am I?	Derek Parfit, “Personal Identity” from <u>Reasons and Persons</u> (NR)
10/24	Personal Identity: Where am I?	Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?” (Sakai)
10/26	Agents, Bodies, and Free Will	Sara Bernstein and Jessica Wilson, “Free Will and Mental Quausation” (Sakai)
10/31	Free Will and Responsibility	Galen Strawson, “Free Will” (NR)
11/2	Responsibility and External Influence	Susan Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility” (Sakai)
11/7	Responsibility and Conceptual Limitations	Tamar Szabo Gendler, “On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias” (Sakai)
11/9	Personal Identities	Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be? (Sakai)
11/14	Personal Identities (2)	Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Illusions of Race” (Sakai)

Part IV – Ethics: How should I live? What should I do? Does it matter?		
11/16	The Demands of Morality	Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (NR)
11/21	The Demands of Morality (2)	Onora O’Neill, “The Moral Perplexities of Famine and World Hunger” (NR)
11/23	Moral Knowledge and Experience	John (Fire) Lame Deer, “Talking to the Owls and Butterflies” from <u>Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions</u> (Sakai)
11/28	Foundations of Morality	Segun Gbadegesin, “Yoruba Philosophy: Individuality, Community, and the Moral Order” (Sakai)
11/30	Does Anything Really Matter?	Sharon Street, “Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?” (NR)
12/5	Does Anything Really Matter? (2)	Thomas Nagel, “The Absurd” (Sakai) Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (Sakai)
Part V – Social and Political Philosophy: How should we live (together)?		
12/7	Preventing All Against All	Thomas Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> , Chapters 13, 17, 18 (excerpts) (NR)
12/12	Promoting All For All	Julius Nyerere, “Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism” (Sakai)
12/14	Who Are We?	Michael Huemer, “Is there a Right to Immigrate?” (Sakai)