

PHI 205-007

Introduction to Philosophy

3(3-0-0)

Spring 2020

Professor: Dr. Stephen Puryear

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Class meeting times: TH 8:30a-9:45a (120 Withers Hall)

Office hours: TH 10:00a-11:30a and by appointment

Course Homepage: <https://wolfware.ncsu.edu/>

Enrollment restrictions: None

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to academic philosophy through the study of a combination of historical classics and recent philosophical pieces. Among the questions to be considered:

- What is philosophy?
- Do we have an obligation to obey the government?
- What kind of life is the happiest?
- Is there more to us than just our bodies (e.g., an immaterial soul)?
- Do we have free will?
- What makes right actions right and wrong actions wrong?
- Is it immoral to eat meat?
- Does life have meaning?
- Is life a good thing (for the one who lives)?
- Would immortality be a good thing (for the one who has it)?

Students will be expected to read the assigned material prior to class and to participate in class discussion. Attendance will factor into the student's grade, as will homework assignments (due on most meeting days), a short essay, and three exams.

Course Objectives

This course counts toward satisfaction of the General Education Program (GEP) Humanities Requirement. As such, it aims to help students meet three objectives: (1) Engage the human experience through the interpretation of human culture; (2) Become aware of the act of interpretation itself as a critical form of knowing in the humanities; (3) Make academic arguments about the human experience using reasons and evidence for supporting those reasons that are appropriate to the humanities.

Learning Outcomes

In accordance with the course objectives stated above, students will, by the end of this course, be able to: (1) Interpret, reconstruct, and evaluate philosophical arguments relating to such topics as religion, morality, politics, and the nature of the human being; (2) Identify interpretive issues in philosophical works and appraise the various interpretive options; (3) Construct philosophical arguments, raise objections to those arguments, and identify and evaluate a variety of available replies to those objections. These outcomes will be measured through homework assignments, essays, and exams.

Required Texts

Students should acquire a copy of the following texts. Paper copies can be purchased at the campus bookstore and at various places online. Both texts are available in ebook form, though I recommend the paper version. (A major advantage of the paper text is that it can be referred to in class--electronic devices are prohibited in my classroom.)

- Perry, J. *Dialogue on Consciousness: Minds, Brains, and Zombies* (Hackett, 2018), \$12.00
- Lemos, J. *Freedom, Responsibility, and Determinism: A Philosophical Dialogue* (Hackett, 2013), \$10.00

Grading

Grades for the course will be based on attendance (10%), homework (25%), an essay (15%), two exams (15% each), and a final exam (20%).

Attendance. Beginning with the second meeting of the semester, a roll sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each class. In order to be counted as present for that day, you will need to sign this sheet at the beginning of class. Your final course grade will be calculated on a 100-point scale, so attendance will be worth 10 points. The first 10 unexcused absences will each result in a deduction of one point from the student's attendance grade. Further, any unexcused absences beyond the first 10 will each result in a deduction of one-third of a letter grade from the student's course grade. As I spell out in more detail below, students will be given a chance to earn additional points by completing two extra-credit quizzes worth one point each. Absences will be excused only in accordance with the University's official policy. Please consult this policy for details about the circumstances under which an absence will be excused.

Homework. Typically 2-3 questions on the reading for the upcoming lecture, homework will be assigned and submitted on the course web page at <https://wolfware.ncsu.edu/>. There will be an assignment for every regular class meeting (26 in all), and each will be due at 8:00 a.m. on the day of the corresponding class. The grading of homework will not be particularly strict; I will mainly check to see that you have done the reading and put some thought into the questions. Late homework will be accepted only if one is prevented from completing it by the same circumstances under which an absence would be excused. (See the University's official attendance policy for details.) Note that computer problems are not an acceptable excuse for late homework; nor is just missing the deadline because you waited until the last minute. Students are advised to complete the assignments well in advance of the deadline so as to avoid such problems.

Note: Students are expected to work individually on the composing of their homework answers. Evidence of collusion with another person or improperly documented use of sources will constitute an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such. See below (Plagiarism & Academic Integrity) for details.

Essay. Each student will be required to write one essay, due toward the end of the semester. Topics will be posted on Moodle toward the beginning of the semester. Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day late. Extensions will be granted only under very special circumstances. For calculation purposes, essay grades will be converted from letters to numbers in accordance with the following scheme: A+=98.3; A=95; A-=91.7; B+=88.3; B=85; B-=81.7; etc.

Exams. The exams will consist in a combination of multiple-choice, free response, and essay questions. The dates for all exams can be found on the Moodle course schedule. Make-up examinations will be

offered only under extremely special circumstances, so you should plan to take the exams at the scheduled time. If you miss an exam due to foreseen circumstances, you must contact me prior to the exam to schedule a make-up if you hope to have any chance of being granted one. If you miss an exam due to unforeseen circumstances, you must contact me to schedule a make-up within 48 hours of the exam start time if you hope to have any chance of being granted one.

Extra-credit Quizzes. Two extra-credit quizzes will be offered, one on the content of the syllabus and the other on common writing mistakes. If completed on time and with a perfect score, each quiz will add one point to a student's attendance grade, not to exceed ten points. Essentially, these extra-credit points are a form of insurance against missed classes. The exams will be available here on Moodle and can be taken as many times as necessary up to the deadline. No other extra credit will be offered in this course.

Final numerical averages will be converted to letters in accordance with the following scheme: 96.7-100=A+; 93.3-96.69=A; 90-93.29=A-; 86.7-89.99=B+; 83.3-86.69=B; 80-83.29=B-; etc.

Incompletes

An incomplete grade (IN) may be given to students whose work suffers a serious interruption not caused by their own negligence (e.g., a serious medical condition). Such grades apply only when the student's record in the course is such that the successful completion of particular assignments, projects, or tests missed as a result of a documented serious event would enable that student to pass the course. An IN grade must be made up by the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled or by the end of twelve months, whichever is shorter, or by the extended deadline authorized by the instructor or department offering the course and recorded by the Department of Registration and Records; otherwise it will automatically become an F grade and will count as a course attempted. For more information see the [official university policy](#)

Credit-only (S/U) Students

Students electing to take this course for credit-only (S/U) must complete the homework assignments, submit one of the essays, take all exams, and earn a cumulative grade of C- or better in order to receive a grade of S. Conversion from letter grading to credit only (S/U) grading is subject to university deadlines. Refer to the Registration and Records calendar for deadlines related to grading. For more information see the [official university policy](#).

Auditing Students

Registered students may audit this course with the approval of their adviser, the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, and the instructor. They will be expected to do the assigned reading and to attend class regularly, but not to complete any of the other assignments. For more information see the [official university policy](#).

Course Evaluation

Online class evaluations will be available for students to complete during the last two weeks of the term. Students will receive an email message directing them to a website where they can login and complete evaluations. All evaluations are confidential; instructors will not know how any one student responded to any question, and students will not know the ratings for any instructors.

Evaluation website: <https://classeval.ncsu.edu/>

Student help desk: classeval@ncsu.edu

More information about ClassEval: <http://www.ncsu.edu/UPA/classeval/>

Portable Electronic Devices

The use of laptop computers and other portable electronic devices (tablets, smart phones, Google Glass, etc.) is prohibited in this class. Exceptions may be granted in special cases with prior approval of the instructor. This policy will be strictly enforced.

Classroom Etiquette

I expect to receive the undivided attention of each student during class. Please refrain from engaging in distracting activities such as texting, sleeping, reading newspapers, working puzzles, and studying for other classes.

Supporting Fellow Students in Distress

As members of the NC State community, we each share a personal responsibility to express concern for one another and to ensure that this classroom and the campus as a whole remains a safe environment for learning. Occasionally, you may come across a fellow classmate whose personal behavior concerns or worries you. When this is the case, please report this behavior to the NC State Students of Concern website at <http://studentsofconcern.ncsu.edu/>. Although you can report anonymously, it is preferred that you share your contact information so they can follow-up with you personally.

Online Privacy

Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course, via electronic tools like email or web-postings, where relevant to the course. Examples include online discussions of class topics, and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

All students are required to comply with the university policy on academic integrity found in the [Code of Student Conduct](#). In this class, Turnitin will be used to help students ensure that they have not plagiarized others in their written assignments. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Code of Student Conduct; a definition appears below. Students who are found to have plagiarized on their final assignment submissions will have their case referred to Student Conduct for disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism is the use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another and the representation of the other's work as their own. The act of submitting work for evaluation or to meet a requirement is regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own thought and study, produced without assistance, and stated in that student's own words, except insofar as quotation marks, references, or footnotes acknowledge the use of other sources. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully and correctly acknowledged. Submission of work used previously must first be approved by Prof. Puryear. In short, plagiarism includes, though is not limited to, (a) representing the work of others as his or her own, or (b) submitting written materials without proper attribution or acknowledgment of the source.

Disability Accommodation

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the [Disability Services Office](#) located at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 919-515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation \(REG02.20.01\)](#).

Equal Opportunity

NC State University provides equality of opportunity in education and employment for all students and employees. Accordingly, NC State affirms its commitment to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Harassment of any person (either in the form of *quid pro quo* or creation of a hostile environment) based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation also is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. NC State's policies and regulations covering discrimination, harassment, and retaliation may be accessed [here](#). Any person who feels that he or she has been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO) at 515-3148.

Career Services for Humanities & Social Sciences Majors

Explore career options related to your major, make decisions about your major or minor, build resumes and cover letters, prepare for interviews, develop internship/ job search strategies, maximize career fairs, and more. Courtney Jones, Career Identity Coach, serves freshman. Sarah Wild, Career Counselor, and Julianne Britt, Graduate Intern, serve sophomore to graduate-level students. Visit during drop-in hours or schedule an appointment on ePACK.

N.C. State Policies, Regulations, and Rules (PRR)

Students are responsible for reviewing the [NC State University Policies, Regulations, and Rules](#), which pertain to their course rights and responsibilities.

Course Schedule

See Moodle page for course schedule.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to change this course schedule and any other syllabus content with appropriate notification to students.