

## **PHILOSOPHY 203: Introduction to Metaphysics and Epistemology**

Spring 2014

Professor Shamik Dasgupta

Office: 205 Marx Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11-12, 2:30-3:30, or by appointment

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### **Preceptors:**

- Robbie Hirsch ([robbiehirsch@gmail.com](mailto:robbiehirsch@gmail.com))
- Maddy Kilbride ([madisonk@princeton.edu](mailto:madisonk@princeton.edu))
- Cory Nichols ([corymnichols@gmail.com](mailto:corymnichols@gmail.com))

**Aim:** My aim is that by the end of the course, you will have acquired

- an understanding and appreciation of a range of live problems in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology.
- an ability to critically engage with complex ideas, including the ability to object to the ideas of others, to develop ideas of your own, to defend those ideas from potential objections, and to express your ideas crisply and clearly.

### **Assessment:**

- Midterm exam, during the scheduled class time on March 13<sup>th</sup>: 20%
- Final exam, time and date TBD: 30%
- Levels System (see handout): 25%
- Final paper (due Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May (Dean's Date)): 25%

### **Academic Integrity:**

- I strongly encourage you to discuss the material in this class with other students. This includes your ideas for papers: their feedback will improve your ideas.
- Your papers should then be your own work. This means that, having talked about your ideas with friends, you should sit down on your own and write the paper yourself.
  - It's fine to get feedback from other students on drafts, on the content or the presentation of the paper. But the other student should not re-write anything for you.
  - It's also fine to use the writing center—in fact this is encouraged!
- Please see the University's booklet on academic integrity:  
<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/intro/index.htm>

### **Rules of conduct:**

- Philosophy consists largely in *arguments*, where these are understood to be attempts to state *reasons* for various (perhaps controversial) ideas.
- But there is no place in Philosophy for *arguments*, where these are understood to be confrontational events in which people exhibit aggression, disrespect, or any other kind of anti-social behavior.

## Syllabus

All readings will be made available *via* the Blackboard site.

Readings marked \* are optional

**Feb 4<sup>th</sup>** Introduction (no reading)

### **Topic 1: Is There a Scientific Explanation of Our Existence?**

**Feb 6<sup>th</sup>** Why is there something rather than nothing?

- Albert, “On the Origin of Everything”, *New York Times*, March 23 2012 (review of Krauss’s *A Universe From Nothing*)
- Aquinas, “The Five Ways”
- Clarke, “A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument”
- \*Rowe, “The Cosmological Argument”

**Feb 11<sup>th</sup>** Evidence of design I: Biological Complexity

- Sober, “The Design Argument”
- Garcia, “Teleological and Design Arguments”

**Feb 13<sup>th</sup>** Evidence of design II: Fine-Tuning

- Van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 9: “The Place of Rational Beings in the World: Design and Purpose”
- \*Collins, “God, Design and Fine-Tuning”
- \*Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, pp. 134—151

### **Topic 2: Skepticism**

**Feb 18<sup>th</sup>** Hume’s Problem of Induction

- Feldman, *Epistemology*, chapter 1
- Salmon, “An Encounter with David Hume”
- \*Feldman, *Epistemology*, chapter 7
- \*Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, II, IV

**Feb 20<sup>th</sup>** Solutions to Hume’s Problem?

- Harman, “The Inference to the Best Explanation”, pp. 88-91
- Strawson, “The ‘Justification’ of Induction”
- \*Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, chapter 6: “Epistemic Relativism Rejected”

**Feb 25<sup>th</sup>** Descartes’ Problem

- Descartes, *Meditations 1 and 2*
- \*Feldman, *Epistemology*, chapter 6

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup>** The New Riddle of Induction

- Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction”

### Topic 3: Epistemic Catastrophe

- March 4<sup>th</sup>** Peer Disagreement
- Christensen and Lackey, *The Epistemology of Disagreement*, chapter 1: “Introduction”
  - Kelly, “The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement”
- March 6<sup>th</sup>** Epistemic Catastrophe
- Plantinga, selections from *Warrant and Proper Function*
  - Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, chapter 10
- March 11<sup>th</sup>** Self-locating belief
- Elga, “Self-locating Belief and the Sleeping Beauty Problem”
- March 13<sup>th</sup>** Midterm exam

SPRING RECESS

### Topic 4: Mind and Body

- March 25<sup>th</sup>** Materialism
- Papineau, *Thinking About Consciousness*, Chapter 2
  - Bennett, “Mental Causation”
  - \*Ney, “Defining Physicalism”
- March 27<sup>th</sup>** Dualism I: The Knowledge Argument
- Nagel, “What is it Like to Be a Bat?”
  - Jackson, “The Qualia Problem”
  - \*Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know”
- April 1<sup>st</sup>** Dualism II: The Conceivability Argument
- Gertler, “In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism”
  - \*Chalmers, “Consciousness in a
  - \*Descartes, *Meditations 6*
- April 3<sup>rd</sup>** Anomalous Monism
- Davidson, “Mental Events”

### Topic 5: Personal Identity

- April 8<sup>th</sup>** The Problem of Personal Identity
- Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 10, sections 75-78
  - Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 11, sections 80-82
  - \*Dennett, “Where am I”

- April 10<sup>st</sup>** Psychological vs Bodily Continuity
- Thomson, “People and their Bodies”
  - Williams, “The Self and the Future”
  - Gendler, “Exceptional Persons”

- April 15<sup>th</sup>** Is Identity What Matters?
- Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* chapter 12, sections 87-90
  - Parfit, “Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons”

- April 17<sup>th</sup>** Identity Is What Matters
- Wolf, “Self Interest and Interest in Selves”
  - Lewis, “Survival and Identity”

### **Topic 6: Freedom and Responsibility**

- April 22<sup>th</sup>** The Free Will Problem
- Vihvelin, “Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Impossibilism”

- April 24<sup>th</sup>** Compatibilism I
- Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity”
  - van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 12: “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will”

- April 29<sup>th</sup>** Compatibilism II
- Beebe, “The Non-Governing Conception of Laws of Nature”
  - Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

- May 1<sup>st</sup>** Libertarian Free Will
- Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”
  - Plantinga, “What is Intervention?”