

University of California, San Diego
Philosophy 1 Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2019

Professor Don Rutherford (drutherford@ucsd.edu)
Office hours: Tu 12:30-1:30 pm, W 4-5 pm (HSS 8046)
Office phone: 858-534-6802
Class website: <http://triton.ed.ucsd.edu>
TA: Cami Koepke (ckoepke@ucsd.edu)
Office hours: TuTh 10:00-10:50 am (HSS 7086)

Class: TuTh 11:00am-12:20 pm
Mandeville B-150

Description

This course introduces some of the central issues of Western philosophy and the methods used to investigate them. Many of these issues can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, who directed his fellow Athenians to three fundamental questions that concern any human being: What can we know? What are we? How should we live?

The first question addresses the authority of those who claim to have knowledge that others are required to accept. How can we identify those who have such knowledge? What distinguishes knowledge from belief or faith? What are the limits of human knowledge and how do we go about recognizing them?

The second question addresses our understanding of our own existence: the distinctive characteristics, if any, that make us human. Often these are linked to our capacity for conscious thought, rationality, or moral responsibility. Are these essential properties of human beings, and, if so, how do they make us different from other forms of life?

The third question addresses issues of ethics or morality: Is there a right or best way to live for a human being? What are our duties to other human beings (or other non-human beings), and how do we go about recognizing those duties?

Each of these questions generates a complicated series of debates that take us far beyond the limits of an introductory class. My goal is that you come away from the class with a solid understanding of the scope of philosophical inquiry and a good grasp of how philosophers make an argument on behalf of their claims. You will find that philosophy has a lot in common with modern science, but that it addresses a broader set of questions that reflect our efforts to understand our own lives—questions framed from a first-person point of view. Among these is the question of how scientific knowledge should inform our understanding of ourselves. Are we just as science tells us we are, or is it up to us to integrate that knowledge with an independently formed conception of ourselves?

In pursuing answers to these questions we will be guided by a collection of historical and contemporary readings (all available online via the class TritonEd site). The readings will form the basis of class discussion and your writing assignments. The aim of the class, however, is not to be able to regurgitate this material; rather, it is that you be able to respond critically to it through your thinking and writing and that you begin to develop your own views on the questions that philosophy addresses.

Format of the Course

This course is structured around your engagement and participation. If you are seeking a course where you can avoid attending class and simply study the material on your own well enough to earn a P, this is *not* the course for you. I expect you to be present for every class session (unless you have a legitimate excuse such as illness or an approved university event), to be up-to-date on the reading and to participate in discussion. Again, this course is not

concerned just with learning facts about what past philosophers have thought, but with learning to philosophize for yourself: applying the methods of philosophy to issues that matter to you. If you're not in class, interacting with me and other students, you're not meeting the expectations of the course.

Each week we will consider a different set of philosophical issues as described below in the schedule. On Tuesday, I'll introduce the topic and make available a handout that lays out the issues. In class, we'll work through the handout and you'll have a chance to raise questions. We'll also spend time discussing at least one of the assigned readings. On Thursdays, we'll explore the other assigned reading(s) and I'll hand out the week's problem. You'll break up into groups to discuss the problem, after which we'll reconvene to share our insights. Then, over the weekend, you'll write a one-page reflection paper giving your own response that is due on TritonEd at 11:59 pm the following Monday.

There will be a couple of exceptions to this format, but in general that's how the course will be structured, and it depends upon your being present and an active participant.

Writing Assignments and Grading

Besides seven weekly reflection papers, there will be two other writing assignments: a shorter midterm paper and a longer final paper due in the final exam period. Both of these will respond to prompts that I distribute. There are no exams for the class. Grades will be assigned as follows:

- Seven reflection papers (max. 400 words) due Monday by 11:59 pm 20%
(except 5/13 and 5/27)
- Short midterm paper (1200 +/- 100 words) due Monday, 5/13 at 11:59 pm 25%
- Longer final paper (2000 +/- 200 words) due Tuesday, 6/11 by 2:30 pm 35%
- Attendance and participation 20%

Prompts for the midterm and final papers will be distributed at least one week in advance of the due dates. Attendance will be tracked through a sign-in sheet. I recognize that talking in class is easier for some than others. Participation also can be demonstrated, e.g., through your active involvement in group work and your presence in office hours (mine or Cami's).

Other Important Information

- Use of computers, phones and other electronic devices is not allowed in class, except with written permission from the Office for Students with Disabilities.
- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible.
- Paper extensions will only be given to those who present evidence of a valid excuse in a timely manner. Note that computer or printer failure does **not** usually constitute a valid excuse, so be sure to take all necessary precautions to safeguard your work (backup, backup, backup!). If at any time you believe you have a legitimate claim to an extension, bring it to my attention as soon as possible (e.g., if you are going to be out of town for a legitimate purpose, such as a university-sponsored concert performance, athletic event, conference, or the equivalent). Unexcused late papers will be penalized one +/- letter grade per day.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship:

- Week 6 (5/7, 5/9) Freedom and Responsibility
- Readings: Peter van Inwagen, "Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism" (1975)
 Daniel Dennett, "Free Will Worth Wanting" (2016)
 P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment" (1962)
 Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" (1971)
- Week 7 (5/14, 5/16) What Has Value and Why?
 [Midterm paper due 5/13, 11:59 pm; no reflection paper]
- Readings: Plato, *Euthyphro*
 Jesse Prinz, "The Emotional Basis of Moral Judgments" (2009)
 Sharon Street, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?" (2014)
- Week 8 (5/21, 5/23) Moral Demands
- Readings: Plato, *Crito*
 Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (excerpt) (1785)
 Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)
- Week 9 (5/28, 5/30) Acknowledging the Value of Others
- Readings: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2 (excerpt) (1861)
 Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972)
 Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" (1974)
- Week 10 (6/4, 6/6) What Matters in Life
- Readings: Robert Nozick, "Happiness" (1989)
 Susan Wolf, "Why It Matters" (2010)