

Introductory Handout Philosophy 1 The Nature of Philosophy
Fall, 2016 Professor Richard Arneson Teaching Assistant Peter Yong

Course readings, recommended readings, information on exams, lecture notes, and other course materials will be available at the TRITON-ED course site. (At the course page, click on the “Course Content” folder to access course materials.)

Lecture-discussions Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00-12:20 in Warren Lecture Hall (WLH) 2205.

The final exam for this course takes place on Wednesday, December 7 from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, be sure this required final exam fits into your schedule.

This course is an introduction to philosophy. Our assumption is that philosophy emerges from puzzles and problems that confront ordinary people in ordinary life. These problems appear not to be resolvable by gathering more empirical facts. For example, someone might demand some conduct from you, on the ground that omitting to do it would be morally wrong, and you might wonder whether there is a real distinction to be drawn between what’s morally wrong and what isn’t, or is this distinction bogus? For another example, some of us believe that the universe we inhabit was created and sustained by an all-powerful, all-knowing God, but how can we reconcile this belief with the plain fact that there is massive evil in the world? For another example, many of us believe that normal humans are agents responsible for their choices, but what does the idea of being a responsible agent amount to? Thomas Nagel worries, “I believe that in a sense the problem has no solution, because something in the idea of agency is incompatible with actions being events, or people being things”—yet Nagel also holds that actions are events and people are things. So, what gives? Trying to think straight about such matters, we tend to find deep conflicts among our ordinary concepts, our ordinary ways of thinking about the world. The question then arises whether further thinking can resolve these matters in some satisfactory way. Following along this path, we are doing philosophy.

In this course, we survey several topics: (1) on the assumption there are moral duties, what is their content and extent?, (2) whether moral claims about what is morally right and wrong can be genuine assertions capable of being true or false or instead just expressions of our attitudes and feelings, (3) if moral claims can be genuine assertions, what determines that any particular claim is true or false?, (4) what, if anything, would make life meaningful or meaningless, (5) how do we draw the line between science and pseudoscience, if there is such a line to be drawn, (6) the nature and existence of God and the nature of religious faith), (7) we think of human individuals as combining mental and physical features, but what is the relationship between the mental and the physical?, and (8) whether it makes sense to hold individuals morally responsible for their choices and the outcomes of their choices,

This course is an introductory survey. We skim the surface of these topics; I don’t claim to be settling any of them. (This is not to say the questions are rationally unresolvable, unresolvable.) One aim of the course is to gain greater understanding of the questions we start with and how one might reason to good answers to them. A second aim is to gain understanding of some classic philosophical texts. Writers have been grappling with these issues for hundreds of years. We examine ancient and contemporary samples of these grapplings. A third course aim is to practice reading and understanding difficult readings and interpreting and assessing them in clear prose.

Course texts: Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, eds., Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy, 13th edition . This text is available online at the TRITON-ED course site (under the “Course Content” folder, “Required readings” subfolder, at the very top of the list, before list of weekly readings.). Further readings are available at the same TRITON-ED course site.

Course Requirements: There is a class participation course requirement (described in the next paragraph). The other course requirements are a midterm exam in class (Thursday of week 5), an analytical writing assignment (about five to seven pages in length), and a regular final exam. The writing assignment will not require extra reading, but will ask you to interpret and assess some course texts. On

the writing assignment you will have a choice among topics assigned in class. The writing assignment has two components: (1) write a draft or outline of your paper and discuss it with J.P. Messina or me and (2) complete and turn in a final draft of your paper. The final exam will comprehend all course materials (required not recommended readings, lectures, and handouts). The final exam will consist of one and a half hours of essay questions (these will somewhat emphasize material covered after the midterm) and one and a half hours of short "paragraph essay" questions testing reading comprehension (these will range over all required course readings). **On the exams and writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit.**

To encourage keeping up with the reading class by class and week by week, there will be a class participation component of your grade. About one-half of class time will be taken up with lecture and one-half with class discussion. On most class days, there will be class discussion for several minutes near the start of the class, usually on questions posed in advance of class (and relating to the readings assigned for that class). On any class day, even if we start with lecturing, you are encouraged to interject questions and comment. I will take notes after every class on the class discussion, and the quality and frequency of your contributions to discussion will be the basis of your class participation grade, along with two other components. (1) You may also participate in class discussion by sending me email questions or comments before class regarding some significant aspect of the assigned reading for that day. I will keep a file of these email messages for each student. (2) Also, at least once a week, and sometimes twice, throughout the quarter, there will be a writing exercise in class. This will ask you to write about some topic related to the reading for that day's class (or maybe also on recent readings prior to that class). These writing exercises will be collected and graded in a rough-grained way. --So there are three components of class participation. At the end of the quarter, all of these participation efforts will be summed for each student and graded on a curve.

Grading: If you are taking the class on a PASS/NOTPASS basis, you must get (1) a C minus or better on the final exam as well as (2) an overall average C minus grade on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A minus or better average on the midterm exam, writing assignment, and class participation, and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

Your class participation counts for 20 percent of your final grade, the midterm exam counts for 20 per cent of your course grade, the writing assignment for 25 per cent, and the final examination for 35 per cent.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

Disability. If you have a certified disability that requires accommodation, you should register with the campus Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and provide me a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by that Office. A copy of this same letter should also be given to the OSD liaison person in the Philosophy Department at the start of the term, so accommodation can be arranged,. Please let me know your disability status at the start of the course, so I can work with the office to comply with the accommodation it stipulates as appropriate.

Academic Integrity. Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. No dishonesty or cheating, in other words. See the University Policy on academic Integrity.

Note on the readings: The Feinberg & Shafer-Landau text includes introductions to the different readings grouped by topic (part 1, part 2, and so on). These introductions are useful for providing short overviews of the topics and themes. Most of the readings by Thomas Nagel also provide fairly accessible, short introductory overviews of the topics they treat.

A tip for success: The key to success in this class is to keep up with the reading steadily. The reading varies in difficulty; some of it is quite challenging. You will have to put more time into reading philosophy material than you might initially suppose. If you do the reading before the lecture/discussion that deals with it, you will get more out of the reading and the class.

Office Hours: You are welcome and encouraged to come to my (Arneson's) office hours or those of your TA whenever you want to talk about the course material and themes, the assignments, or any other course-related concerns you have.

Arneson's office hours: Wednesdays 2-3 p.m. and Thursdays 3-4 p.m.. in HSS 8057.

Arneson's email: rarneson@ucsd.edu. Peter Yong's email p1yong@ucsd.edu

Peter Yong's office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-1:30 at the Loft.

Schedule of Readings and Lecture/Discussion Topics

Week 1. September 19-25.

THUR: Introduction to course. What are reasons? What are arguments? An argument for religious faith as a rational gamble. Reading: B. Pascal, "The Wager," available at the TRITON course page, under "required readings" folder. Background Reading: Theron Pummer on reasons and arguments (class handout).

Week 2. September 26-October 2.

TUES: What do we owe one another? Is killing the innocent always morally wrong? Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense"; also Michael Otsuka, "Killing the Innocent in Self-Defense," both available at TRITON course page.

THUR: Under what conditions, if any, is killing morally permissible? The example of killing in warfare.

Reading: Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (excerpt); also Jeff McMahan, "The Ethics of Killing in War," both available at the TRITON course page. Recommended reading: Michael Walzer, Chapter 4 of *Just and Unjust Wars*; also Richard Arneson, "Just Warfare Theory and Noncombatant Immunity," both available at TRITON course web page.

Week 3. October 3-9.

TUES: Are there moral truths about how we should live? Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Right and Wrong," available at the TRITON course page; also, Russ Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Subjectivism," pp. 297-310 in Shafer & Landau. Recommended reading: Philip Quinn, "God and Morality," pp. 325-342 in Shafer & Landau.

THUR: Right and wrong. Reading: J. S. Mill, "Utilitarianism," (excerpt), pp. 342-366 in Shafer & Landau, and W. D. Ross, "What makes Right Acts Right"?, available at TRITON course page.

Recommended reading: Thomas Nagel, "Justice."

Week 4. October 10-16.

TUES: Meaningful/meaningless life. Reading: Richard Taylor, "The Meaning of Life," also Susan Wolf: "The Meanings of Lives," available at TRITON course site. Recommended reading: Thomas Nagel, "The Meaning of Life" and "The Absurd," both available at TRITON course site.

THUR: Science and pseudo-science. Reading: Karl Popper, "Science: Conjectures and Refutations," available at TRITON course page.

Week 5. October 17-23.

TUES: More on the nature of science. Reading: Philip Kitcher, "Believing Where We Cannot Prove," available at TRITON course page. Normal science and scientific revolutions. Recommended reading: Thomas Kuhn, excerpt from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, available at TRITON course site under file title "Kuhn1."

THUR: MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.

Week 6. October 24-30.

TUES: Religious belief on the basis of faith not reason (Kierkegaard). Reading: Soren Kierkegaard, "Subjectivity Is Truth," available at TRITON course site.

THUR: Arguments for the existence of God; The Ontological Argument. Reading: Anselm of Canterbury, "The Ontological Argument," and Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, "On Behalf of the Fool.," both available at TRITON course page. Recommended reading: William L. Rowe, "The Ontological Argument," also available at TRITON course page.

Week 7. October 31-November 6.

TUES: Arguments for the existence of God; the argument from design. Reading: William Paley, "The Argument from Design," pp. 15-21 in Feinberg and Shafer-Landau; also David Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (excerpts), pp. 21-59 in Feinberg & Shafer-Landau.

THUR: The argument from evil. Reading: J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," and Robert Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," both readings available at TRITON course page.

Recommended reading: Richard Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil,": available at TRITON course page.

Week 8. November 7-13.

TUES: The argument from evil. Reading: R. Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil"; also David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?," available at TRITON course site.

THUR: Mind and Body. Reading: Brie Gertler, "In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism," pp. 182-196 in Feinberg and Shafer-Landau; also Thomas Nagel, "The Mind-Body problem," available at TRITON course page.

FRIDAY: **VETERANS' DAY HOLIDAY.**

Week 9. November 14-20.

TUES: **Deadline for discussing your writing assignment with Messina or Arneson.**

More on mind and body. Reading: Frank Jackson, "The Qualia Problem," also Paul Churchland: "Functionalism and Eliminative Materialism," both available at TRITON course page.

Recommended reading: Peter Carruthers, "The Mind Is the Brain," in Feinberg & Shafer-Landau.

THUR: Free will and moral responsibility. Reading: Peter Van Inwagen, "The Mysteries of Free Will"; also Thomas Nagel, "Free Will," both available at TRITON course page.

Week 10. November 21-27.

TUES: **Writing assignment due in class.** Free will libertarianism. Reading: Robert Kane, "Free Will: Ancient Dispute, New Themes," pp. 241-255 in Feinberg & Shafer-Landau.

THUR: **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: NO CLASS.**

Week 11. November 28-December 4.

TUES: Incompatibilism and hard determinism. Reading: Derk Pereboom, "Why We Have No Free Will and Can Live without It," pp. 261-276 in Feinberg & Shafer-Landau.

THUR: Compatibilism: Determinism is compatible with moral responsibility. Reading: A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity," and Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," both available at TRITON course page.