

Phil 115 Philosophical Methods Seminar

Syllabus
Winter 2018
Tu-Th 12:30-1:50 pm
Humanities and Social Science Building
Room 8025

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Office Hours: Tues. & Wed. 2:00-3:00 pm

1. Overview

This course is designed for majors to hone their skills in constructing, evaluating and presenting philosophical arguments. Students will refine their ability to speak and write about such arguments in a clear and careful way. The small seminar setting will provide an ideal opportunity to practice all of the above. The format of each class will be discussion of the views and arguments expressed in the readings assigned for that day, with everyone contributing to constructive class discussions.

Our means of honing our skills will be through a close examination of debates set off by Derek Parfit in his philosophical masterpiece, *Reasons and Persons*. What is it that makes someone the same person through time? What is the non-identity problem and is it solvable? How cogent is the anti-natalist view, which holds that it would have been better if none of us had even been born, and so never had an identity in the first place? These are some of the questions will ask, all of which hinge one way or another on questions of identity as they were first outlined by Parfit.

2. Assessment

1. Four to six weekly short two-three page papers responding to the readings, from week two to week eight. Your grade will be based on the top four grades, so you can turn in all six and use the top four, or just turn in four (20%).

2. One term paper (about 10-15 pages), preceded by a prospectus that includes the main ideas and a bibliography (1-2 pages). I will provide feedback on the prospectus before you get started on the paper (10% + 35% = 45%).

Prospectus due: Tues. March 6, start of class.

Term-paper due: Thurs. March 22, 5:00 pm. (Exam week).

(3) Attendance and participation (15%). If you have a valid excuse and cannot make it to class, you need to let me know as soon as you can.

(4) Two oral presentations (5% + 15% = 20%).

3. Readings and Schedule

There are three required texts, all of which will be available at the bookstore and also on reserve at the library:

Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Dancy, Jonathan ed. *Reading Parfit*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997.

Benatar, David. *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming Into Existence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Week One: Course Intro and Personal Identity

Tues. Jan 9. Introduction to Phil 115. No reading.

Thurs. Jan 11. *Reasons and Persons*, 199-243.

Week Two: Personal Identity cont.

Tues. Jan 16. *Reasons and Persons*, 245-302.

Thurs. Jan 18. *Reasons and Persons*, 302-347.

Week Three: Responses to Parfit I

Tues. Jan 23. Shoemaker, Sydney. "Parfit on Identity." *Reading Parfit*, 135-48.

Thurs. Jan 25. Thomson, Judith Jarvis. "People and Their Bodies." *Reading Parfit*, 202-229.

Week Four: Future Persons

Tues. Jan 30. *Reasons and Persons*, 351-390.

Thurs. Feb 1. *Reasons and Persons*, 391-441.

Week Five: Responses to Parfit II

Tues. Feb. 6. Adams, Robert Merihew. "Should Ethics be More Impersonal?" *Reading Parfit*, 251-89.

Thurs. Feb. 8. Temkin, Larry. "Rethinking the Good, Moral Ideals and the Nature of Practical Reasoning." *Reading Parfit*, 290-345.

Week Six: Absent Desires and Persons in Prospect (note there are two readings for Tuesday)

Tues. Feb. 13. Handfield, Toby. "Absent Desires." *Utilitas* 23/4 (2011), 402-27. **And:** Velleman, David. "Persons in Prospect." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36/3 (2008), 221-244.

Thurs. Feb. 15. Velleman, David. "Persons in Prospect." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36/3 (2008), 245-288.

Week Seven: Anti-natalism I

Tues. Feb. 20. Benatar, David. *Better Never to Have Been*. Chapter Two, 18-59.

Thurs. Feb. 22. Benatar, David. *Better Never to Have Been*. Chapter Three, 60-92.

Week Eight: Anti-natalism II

Tues. Feb. 27. Benatar, David. *Better Never to Have Been*. Chapter Four, 93-131.

Thurs. Feb. 29. To be determined.

Week Nine: Presentations I

Tues. March 6. No readings (class presentations)

Thurs. March 8. Presentations. No Reading.

Prospectus due: Tues. March 6, start of class.

Week Ten: Presentations II

Tues. March 13. Presentations. No Reading.

Thurs. March 15. Presentations. No Reading.

Term-paper due: Thurs. March 22, 5:00 pm. (Exam week).

4. General Information

4a Office Hours

I keep both normal and electronic office hours. Drop by in person or contact me via Skype (ID: andy_lamey). I am also available immediately after class or by appointment. I am always happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you.

4b Email Policy

I am happy to reply to emails sent from UCSD email addresses. I do not reply to emails from non-UCSD addresses. Please note that there are two subjects I do not discuss by email, even if they are sent from a UCSD account. These are:

a) Requests for information about the exam that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the exam.

b) Requests to adjust your final class grade. If you have an issue with your grade please make an appointment to discuss it during my office hour next quarter.

4c Late Work

For all assignments handed in after the due date and without an extension, a five percent penalty applies for the first day of the missed deadline. After that, a subsequent penalty of two percent per day will be applied for the next thirteen calendar days after the due date (including Saturdays and Sundays). No assignment can be accepted after more than fourteen calendar days except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with your professor. Assignments that are handed in late without an extension will be graded and returned after those that were completed on time and will not receive comments.

4d Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

4e 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. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>

4j Technology in the Classroom

Please note that until further notice, laptops and tablets are not permitted in class.