



Introduction to Philosophy: Nature of Reality

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Office hours: Mondays 11am-12 noon (and by appointment), in NTPLLN 0435

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Overview

As its title suggests, this course will be an introduction to some of the Big Questions about the nature of reality, what kinds of things there are in the world, and how they are related to one another. These are some of the most exciting and enduring issues in the history of thought, and I hope this brief exposure to them will inspire you and whet your intellectual appetite.

Besides exposing you to classic philosophical puzzles, the course will provide you with plenty of opportunities to hone your critical argumentative skills. Because philosophical texts are sometimes difficult for beginning students (and for their professors!), the course will be relatively challenging for an introductory level class. But if you put in the effort, I know you will learn much, and hope you will find it rewarding.

I won't be presupposing prior knowledge of the subject matter or exposure to philosophical reading/writing/arguing. I will be presupposing that you are intellectually curious and eager to delve into these fascinating issues together.

When and Where

The course will meet synchronously and in person (yay!) at Franklin Antonio Hall 1450 on M,W,F 1-1:50. There is no asynchronous option, classes will not be recorded (barring unforeseen need).

Course requirements and grading

The course requirements include attendance/participation in lectures and sections, as well as a series of relatively low-stakes, hour-long mini-exams.

Attendance will be taken by roll at sections, and will be assessed in lecture by asking you to hand in very short in class answers to questions that come up randomly throughout the quarter (these will only be graded for participation on a simple yes/no scale -- the point of these is to get you thinking and writing about the issues we're discussing).

Though we'll give five mini-exams (one for each segment of the course), we'll automatically discard the lowest scoring one for every student, so this portion of the grade will come from your best four. The first four mini-exams will be in class at our normal time, the final one will be at our assigned time in exam week -- all are marked below on the tentative schedule. You'll need to bring your own bluebooks for each mini-exam; please mark all of these in your calendars and plan accordingly.

Grades will be calculated by the following breakdown:

- attendance and participation: 20%
- equal weighting (20% each) of your best four exams, discarding the lowest-scoring one

Lectures and discussion sections

My job in lectures is to explain some of the main issues and stimulate discussion in ways that go beyond what you could learn from the reading alone. Therefore, it will be impossible to do well in the course with anything less than very regular attendance at the lectures.

Discussion sections are your opportunity to get into the nitty gritty of the arguments, and to engage in the philosophical back and forth we typically won't have enough time for in lectures; this is where much of the real magic/learning will happen. Attendance will be taken.

Make-ups

There will be no make-up examinations except in cases of serious illness, emergency, or pre-arranged accommodations (supported by proper documentation).

Respect

Use of laptops, tablets, and phones won't be permitted in class, except in special cases. Contact me for permission if you have specific reasons why you will need to use any of these devices.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated in this course; violators will receive an F on at least the relevant assignment and possibly the course, and will be subjected to UCSD's disciplinary procedures (which could result in penalties including permanent expulsion from the university).

You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [UCSD Policy on Integrity](http://issuu.com/AcademicIntegrity/docs/policy_on_integrity_of_scholarship_effective_fall_?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Flight%2Flayout.xml&showFlipBtn=true) (http://issuu.com/AcademicIntegrity/docs/policy_on_integrity_of_scholarship_effective_fall_?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Flight%2Flayout.xml&showFlipBtn=true) in all respects. In particular, you may not cause or allow your work for this course to resemble that of any other person, and all use of the ideas or words of anyone other than a paper's author must be acknowledged properly.

Texts

I'm making all readings for the course available at the UCSD electronic course reserves. There are no books to buy.

I'll announce reading assignments for each class in the prior one, adjusting our reading schedule to the pace at which we're moving through the material. It is essential that you keep up; you won't get much out of the class (and won't do well in it) if you don't stay on top of the reading.

Tentative Syllabus

(This schedule is a bit optimistic; I may change things up on the fly depending on how we're progressing through things.)

weeks	topic	readings
1-2	does God exist?	Anselm, Proslogion, chapters II, III, IV Gaunilo, A Reply to the Foregoing by a Certain Writer on Behalf of the Fool Rowe, "The Cosmological Argument", ch II Reichenbach, "Cosmological Argument", sections 3 and 5 Paley, Natural Theology, chapters I-II Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, parts 5 and 7 *Sober, "The Design Argument" pp1-12 exam: Friday 11 October
3-4	paradoxes of motion	Huggett, "Zeno's Paradoxes" Black, "Achilles and the Tortoise" *Benacerraf, "Tasks, Super-Tasks, and Modern Eleatics" exam: Friday 25 October
5-6	what makes you you?	Locke: "Of Identity and Diversity," chapter 27, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Parfit, "Personal Identity" Williams, "Personal identity and

		individuation" exam: Friday 8 November
7-8	why is there something rather than nothing?	Rescher, "On explaining existence"; Parfit, "Why is reality as it is?"; Nozick "Why is there something rather than nothing?" exam: Friday 22 November
9-10	thinking (somewhat) precisely about vagueness	Russell, "Vagueness" Keefe and Smith, "Introduction: Theories of Vagueness" p2-26 Fine, "Vagueness, Truth, and Logic" unusual exam time: Monday 9 December, 11:30-12:30

Course Summary:

Date

Details

Due