

# Philosophy UN1010: Methods & Problems

Fall 2017  
MW 10:10am-11:25am

In the history of human inquiry, philosophy has had the place of the initial central sun, seminal and tumultuous: from time to time it throws off some portion of itself to take station as a science, a planet, cool and well regulated, progressing steadily towards a distant final state. This happened long ago at the birth of mathematics, and again at the birth of physics: only in the last century we have witnessed the same process once again, slow and at the same time almost imperceptible, in the birth of the science of mathematical logic, through the joint labours of philosophers and mathematicians.

(J. L. Austin, "Ifs and Cans")

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## Introduction

Welcome to Philosophy 101! In this course, we will examine some famous contemporary and historical philosophical arguments on the nature of the mind, on personal identity, ethical theories, and the notion of meaning. How can a physical object like the human brain give rise to the conscious mind? Is it possible for persons to switch bodies? Is there a difference between what makes an action a good action, and what makes the person who does it a good person? What makes a mark or a gesture not merely informative or misleading, but a truth or a lie? In investigating these questions, we will focus on critical thinking, careful writing, and argument reconstruction.

## Resources

- All required readings will be provided on Courseworks.
- In addition, there are a number of free online philosophy resources. These include:
  - The [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)
  - [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)
  - [PhilPapers.org](#) is a comprehensive index of philosophy works, maintained by philosophers.
  - Jim Pryor’s Guide to [Writing](#) and [Reading](#) Philosophy, and his Guide to Philosophical [Terms and Methods](#). (We strongly encourage you to consult these in connection with your writing assignments.)
  - James Lenman’s [How to Write a Crap Philosophy Paper](#)
  - Greg Restall’s [Lectures on Symbolic Logic](#) (including elementary, mathematical, and non-classical). This is not a course in symbolic logic, and I do not assume that you have had such a course. I will explain any logical concepts that I expect you to know as they come up. But those wishing to pursue the topics further may enjoy Restall’s videos.

## Grade Breakdown

There will be two short papers and two exams in our course. Due dates are included below. I will provide topics to choose from. I cannot read full drafts, but we can work on outlines together in office hours. These papers must make an argument, rather than simply summarize material. We will go over this in detail before your first assignment.

For every day a paper is late, it will lose half a grade, unless you have an advance extension, a note from your academic advisor, or a doctor’s note. If you foresee a problem, get in touch sooner rather than later!

Exams (midterm and final)	40%
Papers	50%
Attendance and Participation	10%

## Academic Integrity

Just like you, I have taken a pledge to abide by Columbia’s statement of policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. This means that I must report any instances of academic dishonesty that occur in our class. This is unpleasant for everyone involved! Unfortunately,

many cases of academic dishonesty are due to ignorance, but cannot be excused for that reason. Be sure to educate yourself about proper citation practices (we will go over these together in class) and consult with me if there is any risk of improper citation.

## Accessibility

If you find yourself struggling with accessibility in the classroom and have not yet contact Disability Services (DS), I encourage you to do so. Registering with DS allows you to take advantage of services such as note-taking, transcription, extra time provided on assignments, access to interpreters, and more. DS can also liaise between you and your professors on your behalf. Students who think they may have specific accessibility requirements can contact Disability Services for a more confidential discussion at (212) 854-2388 (Voice/TTY) or by email at [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu). More information on the registration process is available online at [www.health.columbia.edu/ods](http://www.health.columbia.edu/ods). Finally, if you are struggling psychologically during this course, I can connect you with campus services that are there to help—please ask.

## Important Dates

Midterm	Monday, October 2
Final Day to Add or Drop (any class)	Tuesday, October 10
First Paper Due	Wednesday, November 1
Second Paper Due	Wednesday, December 6
Final Day to Withdraw (any class)	Monday, December 11
Final Exam	TBA ( <i>mid-December</i> )

## Course Schedule – *Subject to Change*

Note: All reading and assignments corresponding to a particular class meeting are to be done *before* that class meeting.

### I. Mind

#### *Dualism and Theories of Mind*

##### Meeting 1: September 6th

Read: Introduction; no reading today.

**Meeting 2: September 11**

Read: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 2

**Meeting 3: September 13**

Read: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 6

**Meeting 4: September 18**

Read: Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"

**Meeting 5: September 20**

Read: Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"

**Meeting 6: September 25**

Read: Re-read Smart

*The Problem of Consciousness*

**Meeting 7: September 27**

Read: Hilary Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

**Meeting 8: October 2**

Read: No reading; **Midterm in class**

**Meeting 9: October 4**

Read: John Searle, "Minds, Brains and Programs"

**Meeting 10: October 9**

Read: Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?"

**October 10: last day to add or drop class**

**Meeting 11: October 11**

Read: Martine Nida-Rümelin, "Pseudonormal Vision"

**Meeting 12: October 16**

Read: Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"

**First Paper Topics Distributed in Class**

*Personal Identity*

**Meeting 13: October 18**

Read: Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"

**Meeting 14: October 23**

Read: Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"

*Parfit links:* [New Yorker profile](#)

**Meeting 15: October 25**

Read: Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future"

## **II. Ethics**

*Decisionmaking and Autonomy*

**Meeting 16: October 30**

Read: Agnieszka Jaworska, "Respecting the Margins of Agency"

**Meeting 17: November 1**

Read: Jaworska, contined

Due: **First Paper**

**Meeting 18: November 8**

Read: Theron Pummer, "Does Division Multiply Desert?"

**Meeting 19: November 13**

Read: John Taurek, "Should the Numbers Count?"

**Meeting 20: November 15**

Read: Nomi Arpaly, "Moral Worth"

***Freedom of the Will and Moral Responsibility***

**Meeting 21: November 20**

Read: Paul Ree, "The Illusion of Free Will" (Selections)

**Meeting 22: November 22**

*No Class (Thanksgiving holiday)*

**Meeting 23: November 27**

Read: Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

**Final Paper Topics Distributed in Class**

***Metaethics***

**Meeting 24: November 29**

Read: Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, Ch. 8 ("Value")

**Meeting 25: December 4**

Read: Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, Ch. 9 ("Ethics")

**III. Meaning**

**Meeting 26: December 6**

Read: Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

*Turing Test links:* [cleverbot](#), [Android Dick](#)

**Due: Final paper**

**Meeting 27: December 11**

Read: H. P. Grice, "Meaning"

**Final Exam** *TBA*