

## **PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy 120. Section 01  
Spring 2006  
Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00-11:30  
Eliot 102

### **Instructors**

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### **Description**

This is an introduction to a broad scope of philosophy through some of its problems. Most of the readings will be contemporary, and the goal will be to learn how to recognize and wrestle with philosophical problems.

There are no prerequisites: this is suitable as a first course in philosophy. But philosophical problems are hard and philosophical writing even harder, no matter how much one tries to simplify them. Considerable attention and work will be required.

### **Grading and Requirements**

The following list should make clear the requirements that we think need to be met by anyone who wants to learn some philosophy this semester. The following list also details as specifically as we reasonably can the procedures that we will be following in assessing grades for this class.

- (1) Attendance and Preparation. These will not be graded formally, but everyone is expected to study the readings carefully and attend class. Be warned that philosophical reading is much more difficult than most. Jim Pryor, a Princeton professor, has posted some helpful advice at <http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/reading.html>  
If you are lost when you are reading, you might be helped just to recall the basic structure of the paradox you are reading about. The web is filled with helpful accounts of the various paradoxes. See especially [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Paradoxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Paradoxes)  
Another online resource that you might find very helpful is <http://plato.stanford.edu>

### **pop quizzes on reading?**

- (2) Two expository essays. The expository essay should contain 500-800 words that explicate the week's starred reading assignment, and it is due by noon on Friday, in the appropriate hanging file in Busch 225. Each student is required

to submit **two** of these by Friday, February 24. No essay will be accepted on Friday, January 20, but each student has five weeks within which to write two expository essays. Choose the weeks in which you write carefully, to write when you have the time and inclination.

To explicate a reading assignment, one should state as plainly as one can the thesis of the assignment, and one should outline the author's case for this thesis. To outline the case, one should explain the argument(s) the author gives for this thesis and (if necessary) the response(s) the author gives to objections or alternative positions. In writing an expository essay, one should exercise judgment about what parts of the reading need to be highlighted and what do not.

Clarity and precision are the hallmarks of a good expository essay. For further help with the writing assignments, see the handout provided in class on the first day.

*100 points each*

- (3) Two constructive essays. A constructive essay for this course should contain 900-1200 words that state a paradox, outline possible solutions, and defend one. Each student is required to submit **one** of these by noon, Friday, March 10, and **another** by noon, Monday, May 1, in the appropriate hanging folder in Busch 225. Unlike the expository essays, the topic for these submissions is not restricted to the week's paradox, but can be any of the paradoxes discussed to that point in the class, **except the problem of evil.**

*100 points for the first, 200 points for the second*

- (4) Revision of the first constructive essay. Each student must resubmit his or her first constructive essay together with a thoroughly revised version (still of 900-1200 words) by noon on Friday, March 31, in the appropriate hanging folder in Busch 225.

A thoroughly revised essay should be thoroughly rethought, and not just edited. The revision will be graded largely on its own terms—how well does it succeed as an essay—but revisions that do not attempt to answer the criticisms offered on the first version will be downgraded.

*200 points*

The deadlines on these assignments are firm, and extensions are not available for anything short of an act of god. (The instructors are the sole interpreters of that last phrase, but they firmly believe that there is nothing miraculous about technology failures or the flu.) Tardy assignments will be downgraded at the rate of 10% of the possible points per 24 hours or fraction thereof. Procrastinators beware.

Philosophy, like virtually all rewarding endeavors, is very hard for most people. Some smart people who generally write well nevertheless struggle to do philosophy well. The instructors are committed to rewarding exceptional work, and so it will not be easy to achieve an 'A' in this course. Nevertheless, they will convert the point totals to a quality grade by a scale that is at least as generous as the usual one (i.e., 97 A+, 93 A, 90 A-, 87 B+, etc.), and the instructors reserve the right to reward particular students who show exceptional progress over the course of the term. Pass/fail students must achieve 500 points to pass.

Finally, a point for all that should be obvious: any student whose work does not conform to the University policy on academic integrity, printed in the Course Listings, will automatically fail the course, and will be subject to University disciplinary action.

Each assignment and paper you turn in must be your own work, and it must have been written specifically for this class. This should not be difficult, as you should not be doing extra research on any of these assignments.

### Texts

There is only one required text at Mallinckrodt:  
Sainsbury, Paradoxes, 2nd ed.

Additional readings will be accessible electronically. Some of them I will distribute as email attachments. You must regularly check the email sent to the address in your WebSTAC account. Other readings are available through JSTOR

<http://www.jstor.org/search/>

To download readings from this site, you must use a computer that is tapped into a Washington University server or that is using Olin Library's server as a proxy, instructions for which are available at

<http://library.wustl.edu/about/proxy.html>

Still other readings will be made available through Olin's E-Res, at

<http://eres.wustl.edu/>

To navigate this website, you will need the name of the primary instructor (Brown) or course (Problems in Philosophy), and you will need the password that will be announced in class and distributed by email. For all of these electronic documents, you need Adobe Acrobat Reader (a free download from [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)) or some other software for displaying and printing pdf files (e.g., Preview in Mac OS X).

### Syllabus

#### **switch order, as metaphysics is too difficult to lead with?**

Jan 17 Introduction  
optional: Sainsbury, Introduction

#### (1) The Problem of Evil

Jan 19 Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, Part V, chapters 4-5 (chapters 35-36 overall) (**Web**)  
(If you do not own this book—and, really, why do you not own this book?—the old translation by Constance Garnett is now in the public domain, and there are several copies of the work available on the web. Google away, or grab an old-fashioned copy from Olin.)

Jan 24 \* Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," Mind 64 (1955): 200-212 (**JSTOR**)

Jan 26 \* Adams, "Must God Create the Best?," Philosophical Review 81 (1972): 317-332 (**JSTOR**)

**Jan 27 Due date for an exposition of Mackie or Adams (1 of 5)**

#### (2) Zeno's Paradoxes

Jan 31 **W. Salmon, Space, Time and Motion, Chapter 2 (E-Res)**  
Sainsbury, Chapter 1

Feb 2 \* P. Benacerraf, "Tasks, super-tasks, and the modern Eleatics," Journal of Philosophy 59 (1962) (**JSTOR**)

**Feb 3 Due date for exposition of Benacerraf (2 of 5)**

(3) Paradoxes of Material Constitution:  
The Ship of Theseus, Heraclitus' River, the Problem of the Many

Feb 7 ***Unger, "The Problem of the Many," Midwest Studies in Philosophy 5 (1980) (E-Res)***

Feb 9 \* Lewis, "Many, but almost one," in Ontology, Causality and Mind, ed. Bacon et al. (**E-Res**)

**Feb 10 Due date for exposition of Lewis (3 of 5)**

(4) The Sorites Paradox

Feb 14 Sainsbury, Chapter 2

Feb 16 \* Williamson, "Vagueness and Ignorance," Supplementary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 66 (1991): 145-162. (**E-Res**)

**Feb 17 Due date for exposition of Williamson (4 of 5)**

(5) The Paradox of the Liar (aka Eubulides' Paradox)

Feb 21 Sainsbury, Chapter 5

Feb 23 \* Kripke, "Outline of a Theory of Truth," The Journal of Philosophy 72 (1975): 690-716 (**JSTOR**) **DO NOT REQUIRE THE LAST THIRD OF THIS ESSAY**

**Feb 24 Due date for exposition of Kripke (5 of 5)**

(6) The Paradox of the Unexpected (or Surprise) Hanging (or Examination)

Feb 28 Scriven, "Paradoxical Announcements," Mind 60 (1951): 403-407. (**JSTOR**)  
Quine, "On a so-called Paradox," Mind 62 (1953): 65-67 (**JSTOR**)  
Sainsbury, Sections 4.2 and 4.3

Mar 2 Williamson, "Inexact Knowledge," Mind 101 (1992): 218-242. (**JSTOR**)

(7) The Lottery Paradox and the Paradox of the Preface

Mar 7 ***Kvanvig, "Epistemic Paradoxes" (Web)***  
<http://www.missouri.edu/~kvanvigj/papers/epistemicparadoxes.htm>

Makinson, "The Paradox of the Preface," Analysis 25 (1965): 205-207. (**E-Res**)  
Hoffman, "Mr. Makinson's Paradox," Mind 77 (1968): 122-123. (**JSTOR**)  
Lacey, "The Paradox of the Preface," Mind 79 (1970): 614-615. (**JSTOR**)  
Hoffman, "The Paradox of the Preface Again," Mind 82 (1973): 441. (**JSTOR**)

Mar 9 Foley, "The Epistemology of Belief and the Epistemology of Degrees of Belief," American Philosophical Quarterly 29 (1992): 111-121. (**E-Res**)

**Mar 10 Last chance for first constructive essay**

Mar 14 NO CLASS — Spring Break

Mar 16 NO CLASS — Spring Break

(8) Paradoxes of Confirmation: Hempel's Raven and the New Riddle of Induction

**Mar 21 Sainsbury, Section 4.1**  
**Goodman, "A Query on Confirmation," Journal of Philosophy 43 (1946): 383-385. (JSTOR)**  
**Schwartz, Scheffler, and Goodman, "An Improvement in the Theory of Projectibility," Journal of Philosophy 67 (1970): 605-608. (JSTOR)**

**Mar 23 Jackson, "Grue," Journal of Philosophy 72 (1975): 113-131. (JSTOR)**

(9) Newcomb's Paradox

Mar 28 Sainsbury, Section 3.1  
Nozick, "Newcomb's Problem and Two Principles of Choice," in Paradoxes of Rationality and Cooperation, ed. Campbell and Sowden (Vancouver, 2005), 107-133. (**E-Res**)

Mar 30 Bar-Hillel and Margalit, "Newcomb's Paradox Revisited," The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science 23 (1972): 295-304. (**JSTOR**)  
Mackie, "Newcomb's Paradox and the Direction of Causation," Canadian Journal of Philosophy 7 (1977): 213-225.

**Mar 31 Last chance for revision of first constructive essay**

(10) Prisoner's Dilemma

Apr 4 Sainsbury, Section 3.2  
Lewis, "Prisoners' Dilemma is a Newcomb Problem," in Paradoxes of Rationality and Cooperation, ed. Campbell and Sowden (Vancouver, 2005), 251-255. (**E-Res**)

Apr 6 **Gauthier, "Morality and Advantage," *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967): 460-475 (JSTOR)** USE THE CHAPTER FROM MORALS BY AGREEMENT INSTEAD?

(11) Voting Paradoxes

Apr 11 **Allingham, "Democracy and Dictatorship," in *Choice Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2002), 87-112. (E-Res)**

Apr 13 Savage, "Allais' Paradox," in *Decision, probability, and utility*, ed. Gärdenfors and Sahlin (Cambridge, 1988), 163-165. (**E-Res**)  
Weber, "The Resilience of the Allais Paradox," *Ethics* 109 (1998): 94-118. (**JSTOR**)

(12) The Paradox of Hedonism

Apr 18 Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism," in *Reason and Responsibility*, 9th ed., ed. Feinberg (Wadsworth, 1996), 497-508. (**E-Res**)

Apr 20 Timmerman, "Too much of a good thing? Another paradox of hedonism," *Analysis* 65 (2005): 144-146. (**E-mail**)  
Feldman, "Timmerman's new paradox of hedonism: neither new nor paradoxical," *Analysis* 66 (2006): 76-82. (**E-mail**)

(13) The Toxin and Deterrence Paradoxes

Apr 25 Kavka, "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978) (**JSTOR**)  
Kavka, "The Toxin Paradox," *Analysis* 43 (1983) (**E-Res**)

Apr 27 Gauthier, "Assure and Threaten," *Ethics* 104 (1994) (**JSTOR**)

**May 1 Last chance for second constructive essay**