**PHIL-169: What am I?**

Summer, 2017

MTWR, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm, Maguire 103

*Instructor:* Benjamin Elzinga

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Office Hours:

TBD

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to some central issues in philosophy, central figures

in the history of philosophy, and techniques of philosophical argument through a consideration

of the question of what it is to be a person. More specifically, we will focus on questions

surrounding two distinct but related aspects of personhood. First, we will address classic

problems in the philosophy of mind: what it is to have a mind and what the is relationship

between mind and body? For that we turn to foundational texts from Rene Descartes and Alan

Turing as well as more contemporary works from Daniel Dennett and Victoria McGeer. Next, we

turn to the problems of free will. Does free will exist? What is the relationship between freedom,

determinism, and responsibility? To address such questions, we will focus on the "value

problem" for free will as explored by contemporary philosophers such as Robert Kane and P.F.

Strawson as well as classic works by David Hume.

Course Goals:

1) Students will gain knowledge and appreciation of some of the deep problems in the philosophy of mind and problems of free will in a contemporary context.

2) Students will develop a set of analytic tools that will help them to find answers to hard theoretical questions, whether philosophical questions or questions that arise in their broader engagement with the world.

Required Texts:

There are no required textbooks to purchase. All readings will be distributed via blackboard.

Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be based on three short papers (5 pages max, times new roman, 12 point font, double spaced) and participation including weekly reflection assignments or in class quizzes:

1) Three Short Papers (each worth 25% of total grade)

In these papers, your task will be to do some philosophy yourself. For example, the typical philosophy paper has three parts:

a) explaining an argument that is developed by one (or more) of the philosophers whose work we have examined; b) offering a plausible objection to this argument; and c) explaining how the philosopher in question would respond to your argument.

2) Weekly Assignments (15% of total grade)

Students will be required to complete short weekly assignments or in-class quizzes to assess their level of engagement with the material and to facilitate in class participation.

3) Participation (10% of total grade)

The material that we are going to cover in this class is difficult and likely to be unfamiliar. Thus, careful attention to each text will be expected and required. There will always be some opportunity for you to ask pressing and important questions, bring up something you find confusing, raise an objection against something we've read, etc.

Your participation grade will be determined by your active, participation in class. Receiving full credit will require zero unexcused absences and a consistent effort to genuinely engage with the material and with your classmates each time we meet.

Late Work and Extensions:

Late papers will automatically be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc) for each day that they are late. Extensions may be possible but only if requested before the due date.

Attendance:

Your participation grade is in part determined by your attendance. In addition, after TWO unexcused absences your *course grade* will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade (e.g. B+ to B) for each additional absence.

Grading:

These are the general criteria I use for assigning specific grades on written work. What matters most is not the content of your ideas, but their originality, creativity and how they are expressed.

A: original ideas very clearly expressed and organized; full grasp of the material and its implications; especially insightful reflection on the relevant texts

B: reasonably original ideas clearly expressed and organized; good grasp of the material and its implications; good reflection on the relevant texts

C: adequate expression and organization of ideas; adequate grasp of the material and its implications; adequate reflection on texts

D: inadequate expression and organization of ideas; inadequate grasp of the material and its implications; inadequate reflection on texts

F: mostly for serious sins of omission, like turning in only part of an assignment

Academic Integrity

This course will be conducted under the strictest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism or other forms of dishonesty are contradictory to the goals of this class and hence, will not be tolerated. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be referred to the Honor Council for investigation, and I reserve the right to fail a student for the entire course in the case of demonstrated violation. Please see *The Undergraduate Bulletin* or, for more information, visit the university’s Honor System website at http://www.georgetown.edu/honor. The website has useful guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite properly.

Health Help

1. Student Health Center

“The health center is staffed by Family Practice faculty physicians and nurse practitioners with particular training and experience in college health, and who are dedicated to providing high quality health care.”

* <http://www3.georgetown.edu/student-affairs/health/index.html>
* Ground Floor, Darnall Hall

2. Counseling and Psychiatric Service

“CAPS offers a broad range of psychological and psychiatric services that attempt to balance the unique needs of individual students with the broader demands of a diverse campus community.  Accordingly, in order to best serve the needs of our campus at large, open-ended or extended psychotherapy and medication maintenance services are limited and cannot be routinely offered.  Such service offerings are based on staff availability and student need.”

* <http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

3. Health Education Services

“Health Education Services is comprised of health professionals who are available to help students deal with a range of personal health issues, including pregnancy, alcohol and drug use and abuse, adult children of alcoholics, eating disorders, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, sexual health, stress management, and general health promotion. In addition, Emotional Intelligence is an area of interest and expertise for the staff of Health Education Services.  All services are individualized, confidential, and free for students, unless otherwise stated.  Staff members are also available to facilitate training and educational programs in these areas.”

* http://www3.georgetown.edu/student-affairs/healthed/staff.html

**Course Schedule**

**(subject to revision)**

Part 1: Mind and Body

**Monday, July 10**: Descartes, Selections from Meditations. Ryle, “Descartes’ Myth”

**Tuesday, July 11**: Turing “Computing machinery and Intelligence”; Descartes, Letter to Cavendish

**Wednesday, July 12**: Watson, “Psychology as the Behaviorist views it”; Churchland, "Philosophical Behaviorism".

**Thursday, July 13**: Functionalism

**Monday, July 17**: Searle, “Minds, brains, and programs”; Churchland & Churchland “The Rediscovery of Light”

**Tuesday, July 18**: Ryle, “Knowing how and knowing that”

**Wednesday, July 19**: Dennett, “True believers”

**Thursday, July 20**: Victoria McGreer, “The Regulative Dimension of Folk-Psychology”.

**Monday, July 24**: Haugeland, “Authentic intentionality”.

Part 2: Freedom and Personhood

**Tuesday, July 25**: Kane, The Significance of Free Will, Chapter 1.

**Wednesday, July 26**: Dennett, “I Could Not Have Done Otherwise—So What?”; Frankfurt,

“Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”.

**Thursday, July 27**: van Inwagen, “The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism”.

**Monday, July 31**: Hume, “Of Liberty and Necessity”.

**Tuesday, August 1:** Kane, “Libertarianism”.

**Wednesday, August 2**: Dennett, “A Hearing for Libertarianism”.

**Thursday, August 3**: Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”.

**Monday, August 7**: Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”.

**Tuesday, August 8**: Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”.

**Wednesday, August 9**: Paraboom, “Why We have No Free Will and Can Live Without It”.

**Thursday, August 10**: TBD