

Phil 150A1: Philosophical Perspectives on the Individual (T-1 INDV)

Location and Time: Haury Anthropology Building, Room 129, Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:45

Instructor: Robert Wallace, rhwallace@email.arizona.edu

Office Hours: Social Sciences Room 130 on T: 10-11:30, W: 2-3:30, or by appointment

The information contained in this course syllabus, *other than the grade and absence policies*, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Course Description:

This course is an opportunity to discuss and critically analyze the relationship between ourselves as human persons and our place in the universe at large. For example, we will be asking questions like the following: What sorts of things can we know about? How do we know anything at all? What is the relationship between our minds and our bodies? Could I still be me if I lost my memories? What is free will, and do we have it? What should we do if we don't? What makes a life a life well lived? What's the meaning of life? What if there is none, then what?

This course will help you develop your own thoughts on these matters by examining philosophical theory and logical reasoning. The goal of the course is to provide you with the tools to think critically, for yourself, about these issues. It is not my job to tell you what to think!

Required Text:

Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?: A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*. ISBN: 978-0195052169

Additional assigned readings will be posted on D2L.

Grading and Assignments:

Grade Breakdown:

Quizzes	10%
Short Paper 1	10%
Short Paper 2	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Long Paper Draft	5%
Long Paper	20%
Final Exam	25%

Attendance and Participation: As this is a combined lecture/discussion course, I am not going to be taking attendance. This does not mean that you should feel free to skip class. Attending class is an essential part of succeeding in this course. The UA's policy concerning Class Attendance, Participation, and Administrative Drops is available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class->

[attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop](http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy). The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable: <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>. Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or dean's designee) will be honored. [file://localhost/See http://policy.arizona.edu:employmenthuman-resources:attendance](http://policy.arizona.edu:employmenthuman-resources:attendance).

Quizzes: I will give a short, unannounced reading quizzes on the assignments. They are designed to be easy for someone who has been doing the readings and has been coming to class.

Papers: There are three assigned papers to write for this course. The first two short papers are meant to be, in essence, five paragraph essays. The second paper is a longer argumentative paper, which you will have the chance to revise before you submit it for a grade. The instructions for the papers will be posted to the D2L website and discussed in class. Please upload your paper to the drop-box on D2L.

Exams: The mid-term exam will be held on 10/5. The date of the final exam is on Monday, December 11th from 3:30 to 5:30 PM. Exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer sections.

Late Work: Work that is handed in after the day after the deadline has passed will be marked down one full letter grade, and so on. For instance an A paper that is received within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a B, 48 hours late will receive a C, and so on. Students with an officially documented excuse will be exempt from this policy with permission from the instructor. The following *do not count* as legitimate excuses: failure to read the syllabus, sleeping in, or forgetfulness.

Rounding and Curving: I will round grades up by .5, so that a 79.5 will earn a B while a 69.5 will earn a C, and so on. I will do no other rounding. 79.4s will not be rounded up. No grades will be curved in the course. However, as things move forward, I reserve the right to curve when needed. Please do not rely on this possibility!

Syllabus Acceptance: Before I record any grades for a student in this course, they must download, sign, and upload the "acknowledgement of the syllabus form" into the assignments folder on D2L. The form can be found in the "syllabus and course info" page on D2L.

Classroom Behavior:

Do not use your cell phones in class. You are allowed to use computers in this course, but if you choose to do so, you must sit in the front rows of the classroom. If you arrive late, please try not to be disruptive. Most importantly, you must be respectful to myself and the other students in the classroom. The classroom is a place where thoughts can be expressed without fear of bullying, discrimination, or threats.

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>. The University is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>

Academic Integrity:

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as described in the UA General Catalog. See <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>. The University Libraries have some excellent tips for avoiding plagiarism, available at <http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>. Ignorance of the academic integrity policies is not a viable excuse. Bottom line: please do your own work. If you have any questions about the policy, for instance, about what would or would not constitute a violation (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) please do not hesitate to ask me!

Accessibility and Accommodations:

Our goal in this classroom is that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. You are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268) to establish reasonable accommodations. For additional information on the Disability Resource Center and reasonable accommodations, please visit <http://drc.arizona.edu>. If you have reasonable accommodations, please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate. Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable.

Confidentiality

Please see: <http://www.registrar.arizona.edu/ferpa/default.htm>

Incompletes and Withdrawals

Requests for incompletes (I) and withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with university policies. Please see: <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2013-14/policies/grade.htm> - I or <http://catalog.arizona.edu/2013-14/policies/grade.htm> - W

Policy on for-profit note-taking

There are a number of organizations that sell notes from classes to students. Using these services is strictly prohibited in this class. Anyone found to be engaged in selling or buying such notes will be in violation of the rules of academic integrity for this course. According to Section D (6) (a) of the University's Intellectual Property Policy (which is available at http://www.ott.arizona.edu/uploads/ip_policy.pdf), faculty own the intellectual property for their course notes and course materials. The instructor of a course holds the copyright to his/her lectures

and course materials, including student notes or summaries that substantially reflect them. Student notes and course recordings are for individual use or for shared use on an individual basis. Selling class notes and/or other course materials to other students or to a third party for resale is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent. Violations to the instructor's copyright are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy these copyrighted materials are subject to Code of Conduct Violations for misuse of student email addresses.

Outline of the Course:

Topic: What Can We Know?

- T 8/22: Course Introduction
Th 8/24 Nagel, Ch. 2, "How Do We Know Anything?"
- T 8/29 **No Class** Please read: Descartes *Meditations I*
Th 8/31 Moore, "Certainty"
- T 9/5 Unger, "A Defense of Skepticism"
Th 9/7 Gettier, "Is Knowledge Justified True Belief?"
- T 9/12 Zagzebski, "What is Knowledge?"

Topic: Minds and Bodies and Personal Identity

- Th 9/14 Nagel, Ch. 4, "The Mind-Body Problem"
Optional Reading: Bison, They're Made Out of Meat
Short Paper #1 Due
- T 9/19 *Meditations II*, Elizabeth of Bohemia and Descartes Correspondence
- Th 9/21 Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* Excerpts: "The Identity Theory" and "Eliminative Materialism"
- T 9/26 Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity" Part 1
- Th 9/28 Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity" Part 2 and 3
Short Paper #2 Due
- T 10/3 Dennett, "Where Am I?" and Review
Th 10/5 **Midterm Exam**

Topic: Free Will

- T 10/10 Nagel, Ch. 6, "Free Will"
Th 10/12 Selections: Baron Holboch, G. Strawson, and McKenna and Pereboom

T 10/17 Van Inwagen “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will”
Th 10/19 Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

T 10/24 P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”

Topic: The Good Life

Th 10/26 Kraut, On Philosophy as a Guide to Well-Being

T 10/31 Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues”
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Excerpts

Th 11/2 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Excerpts
Nozick “The Experience Machine”
Long Paper Draft Due

T 11/7 Kagan, “The Value of Life”

Th 11/9 Wolf, “Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life”

Meaning in Life (and Does It Matter?)

T 11/14 Nagel, Ch. 10, “The Meaning of Life”
Nagel, *The Absurd*

Th 11/16 Socrates, *Phaedo*

T 11/21 Wolf, *The Meaning of Lives*
Long Paper Due 11/22

Th 11/23 No Class, Thanksgiving Break

T 11/28 Schmitz, *The Meanings of Life*

Th 11/30 TBD

Review Session: **T 12/5**

Final Exam Date: Monday, December 11th from 3:30 to 5:30 PM.