

PHL 204: Philosophy in Everyday Life

University of Toronto Mississauga, Winter 2019

Instructor: Dr. Owen Pikkert, owen.pikkert@mail.utoronto.ca

Grader: Jessica Wright, jessicajulia.wright@mail.utoronto.ca

Lecture hours: Tuesdays 1:00 to 3:00, Thursdays 1:00 to 2:00 in IB 235

Instructor's office hours: Thursdays 3:30 to 5:00 in NE 6144

Course description

This is a course about philosophy in everyday life. It is so in two senses: the questions discussed are questions that many people ask themselves, and the sources consulted are primarily sources from newspapers, YouTube videos, TED talks, interviews, and so on. We will consider three questions. These concern whether God exists, whether the mind is a purely physical thing, and whether there is a meaning to life. For each question we will examine three affirmative answers and three negative answers. We will also build a shared library of media sources that address these questions, in addition to those sources required for the course.

Logistics

Evaluation: Three tests at 15% each (on 31 Jan, 5 Mar, 28 Mar), three sets of contributions to the shared media library at 5% each (due on 31 Jan, 5 Mar, 28 Mar), a personal reflection on one of the three questions discussed in this course at 15% (due on 8 Feb if writing on God, 8 Mar if writing on mind, or 3 Apr if writing on meaning in life), and a final exam at 25% (date determined by Registrar for Apr).

Readings: All of the readings are freely available via Quercus.

Tests: Tests will be taken in class. Only material from the lectures will be tested.

Contributions to the shared media library: There will be a shared page on Quercus to which you may post links to various media. For each of the three questions considered in this course, you will have to post two links that address these questions, and read or watch two links that other students have posted. Links may be examined by the instructor, and removed at the instructor's discretion.

Personal reflection: You will have to write a reflection in which you describe your own answer to one of the questions considered in this course. The purpose of this exercise is to force you to summarize and clarify your beliefs in such a way that you can easily communicate them to someone who knows nothing about philosophy. Your position does not have to be either conventional or original; rather, the chief desideratum is that you communicate your beliefs clearly and succinctly, whatever your beliefs might be.

Late submissions and extensions: Late submissions will be penalized at 5% for each calendar day, and submissions more than one week late will not be accepted. To request an extension (including for tests), you must fill out the [Special Consideration Form](#), and include all necessary documentation.

Turnitin.com: Normally, students will be required to submit their personal reflections to Turnitin.com (now incorporated into Quercus) for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their personal reflections to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

Academic integrity

By university regulation, plagiarism will automatically be reported to the Dean. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas or words as if they are your own. You may use ideas and examples that come from others, but you must make clear that you are doing so. It is acceptable to quote, but when you do so, you must clearly provide a citation to the relevant work.

It is important to know that there are various forms of academic offense besides plagiarism. For more information please visit the following website about academic integrity: utm.utoronto.ca/academic-integrity. This site can help you get clear about what counts as an academic offense, how to prevent it, and the university's policies for dealing with suspected cases. Even if you plagiarize unintentionally, it still counts as an academic offense.

Lecture schedule

| Jan 8 | Introduction and philosophical tools

Does God exist?

Yes	Jan 10	To explain the universe's existence	John Updike Sean Carroll	Interview Interview 1 , Interview 2
	Jan 15	To explain the universe's basic laws	Francis Collins Craig vs. Hitchens	Interview Debate ¹
	Jan 17	Because God is your best bet	Gary Gutting	Newspaper article
No	Jan 22	There is pointless suffering	The Tree of Life	Movie
	Jan 24	Religion is just a form of control	Ricky Gervais Friedrich Nietzsche	Newspaper article Book excerpts

¹ Watch 20:00-25:03, 49:53-53:42.

Jan 29	Religion is just wishful thinking	Sigmund Freud	Book excerpts
Jan 31	Test 1		

Is the mind a purely physical thing?

<i>Yes</i>	Feb 5	The mind is the same as the brain	J.J.C. Smart	Article excerpts
	Feb 7	The mind is realized by the brain	Interstellar Stich & Donaldson	Clip 1 , Clip 2 Book excerpt
	Feb 12	Though the physical is mysterious	Galen Strawson	Newspaper article
<i>No</i>	Feb 14	The mind and brain are really distinct	Wireless Philosophy René Descartes	Clip Book excerpts
	Feb 19	Reading week		
	Feb 21			
	Feb 26	Consciousness is not physical	Oliver Burkman	Podcast
	Feb 28	Everything is conscious	David Chalmers William Seager	TED talk Book chapter
Mar 5	Test 2			

Is there a meaning to life?

<i>Yes</i>	Mar 7	Pleasure	Francis Mallmann	Clip 1 , Clip 2 , Clip 3
	Mar 12	Subjective and objective attraction	Susan Wolf	Lecture excerpts
	Mar 14	Feeling alive	Sean Kelly	Newspaper article
<i>No</i>	Mar 19	For we will die	Bryan Magee	Autobiography excerpt
	Mar 21	For we can take an external view	Everything Thomas Nagel	PlayStation trailer Article excerpts
	Mar 26	But we can create our own meaning	Ai Weiwei Jean-Paul Sartre	Newspaper article Article excerpts
Mar 28	Test 3			
Apr 2	The social roles of philosophers	Bertrand Russell Justin Smith	Book chapter Book excerpt	
Apr 4	Envoi			