

## **Philosophy and Persons**

PHIL 130-036

Instructor: Spencer Paulson ([spaulson@luc.edu](mailto:spaulson@luc.edu))

T, Th 4:15-5:30

Cuneo Hall 202

Office Hours By Appointment

### **Introduction**

We have obligations to other persons that differ from our obligations to non-persons. Similarly, persons can be held responsible in a way that non-persons cannot. In virtue of what are these things true? Perhaps it has something to do with our distinctive cognitive capacities, perhaps our unique relation to a deity. So, to better understand who we are as persons and how we fit into the broader scheme of things, we will look into questions about what we can know and, in particular, whether we can know that God exists. We will also consider the question of what makes me (for example) the same person I was yesterday. Along the way we will get a sense of how philosophical methodology works.

### **Course Mechanics**

**Prerequisites:** None

**Required Reading:** We will be reading Plato's *Apology* and *Euthyphro*, David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* and John Perry's *Dialogues On Personal Identity and Immortality*. These titles should be available in the campus bookstore. Everything else assigned will be made available on Sakai.

### **Required Work Overview**

1. Reading responses
2. A mid-term examination
3. A cumulative final examination

### **Required Work and Grading**

Reading responses are graded on a ten-point scale, the mid-term is 100 points and the final is 133. At the end of the term, I will calculate the numerical score for each student according to the weights listed below. This calculation will determine the student's letter grade. I use the following scale to assign letter grades to course scores: 93-100, A; 90-92, A-; 87-89, B+; 83-86, B; 80-82, B-; 77-79, C+; 73-76, C; 70-72, C-; 67-69, D+; 60-66, D; 59 and below, F.

1. Reading Responses 30%
  - a. Online discussions will be structured as responses to questions posed by the instructor. Each week I will ask a question about the reading assigned for Monday.

Answers will be submitted online **as a word document**. They may be no longer than 200 words. Answers are due on **Monday at 5 PM CST**.

2. Mid-term 30%
  - a. The midterm exam will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and brief essay questions. Each student is required to complete the midterm exam.
3. Final Exam 40%
  - a. The final exam will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and brief essay questions. Each student is required to complete the final exam.

### **Reading Responses, Attendance, Participation**

I use the reading responses instead of grading attendance and participation. That said, excellent participation in the course has the potential to positively impact your grade. This works in the following way: suppose you have a B+ at the end of the course that is just behind the A- threshold (e.g., 89.5%). If you have offered quality contributions consistently throughout the course, I will take that into account when entering your final grade and bump you up to an A-. Great participation can take many forms (e.g., in-class discussion, discussion during office hours). I will occasionally post extra discussion boards on the course website where open-ended questions about the readings we have already discussed in lecture can be addressed.

I will mention here that although participation and attendance are not graded separately, it is very hard to succeed in this course without both attending regularly and participating often. I will sometimes introduce vocabulary in the lectures that does not appear in the reading. Some of this vocabulary will appear on exams.

### **Late Reading Responses**

Late reading responses will not be accepted. However, at the end of the quarter, the two lowest grades on reading responses will be dropped.

### **Exams**

The examinations will consist of mixtures of true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and short-essay problems. The dates of both exams can be found on the schedule below which is tentative and subject to change. Students will have one hour to complete each exam. Results and grades will not be available until after the exam is closed for all students.

### **Makeup Exams**

Makeup exams (if any) may, at my discretion, be entirely long-essay exams. They will be offered only to those who have appropriate excuses and appropriate documentation. I will determine the nature of the appropriate documentation on a case-by-case basis. Students should contact me within forty-eight hours of missing an exam, if they wish to take a makeup exam and they think they have a good reason for receiving one.

## Topics and Tentative Schedule

The following is a list of assigned readings for each day of each week of the course. You are strongly encouraged to keep up with the readings. I will provide each of the articles listed below online in pdf form. The books will be available in the campus bookstore. The readings are subject to change, though I will make every effort to provide a one-week advanced notice prior to changing a reading assignment. “\*” indicates that a reading response is due **the night before**.

- August 30<sup>th</sup>- Syllabus/ Course Introduction
- September 1- Plato's *Apology*
- September 6\*- Plato's *Euthyphro*
- September 8- “The *Euthyphro* Dilemma” (Mawson)
- September 13\*- *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Part I, II)
- September 15- *DCNR* (III-V)
- September 20\*- *DCNR* (Part VI, Part VII)
- September 22- *DCNR* (Part VIII, Part IX)
- September 27\*- *DCNR* (Part X-XII)
- September 29- Mid-Term Exam
- October 4- Descartes Background (No Reading Assigned)
- October 6- *Meditation I*
- October 11\*- Mid-Semester Break, No Class (But reading responses are still due on October 10)
- October 13- *Meditation II*
- October 18\*- “Non-Cartesian Sums” (Mills)
- October 20- *Meditation III*
- October 25\*- *Meditation IV*
- October 27- “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” (Frankfurt)
- November 1\*- “Incompatibilism” (Kane, find in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, 7.1 on Sakai)
- November 3- “Compatibilism, Incompatibilism & Impossibilism” (Vihvelin, find in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, 7.2 on Sakai)
- November 8\*- *Meditation VI*
- November 10- “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (Jackson)
- November 15\*- “Multiple Drafts Versus the Cartesian Theater” (Dennett)
- November 17- *Dialogues Concerning Personal Identity and Immortality*, First Night
- Break**
- November 29\*- *DPII* (Second Night)
- December 1- *DPII* (Third Night)
- December 6\*- “Persons and their Bodies” (Thomson, find in *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, 4.1 on Sakai)
- December 8- “Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life” (Wolf), “The Absurd” (Nagel)
- December 13 – Final Exam 4:15 Cuneo Hall 202

## Learning Outcomes and Assessments

The goal of the course is to help students learn to identify the strengths and weaknesses of arguments that have been important in the history of philosophy. This involves being able to identify the key premises of the arguments and state them succinctly. It also involves the ability to recognize the difficulties that they encounter and possible ways of addressing those difficulties.

### **Student Accommodations**

Loyola University Chicago is committed to providing the necessary materials for students in need of accommodations to succeed. In order to receive the accommodations you require, you must first register with student accessibility center (<http://www.luc.edu/sswd>) and then present your accommodation letter to the instructor within the first two weeks of class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Don't cheat and don't plagiarize. I have a zero-tolerance policy for academic integrity issues. At a minimum, violations of the academic integrity policy will result in a zero for the assignment. Serious violations may result in a zero for the course. For more information on academic integrity, go here <https://www.luc.edu/cas/advising/academicintegritystatement/>.

### **Electronic Devices**

I reluctantly allow electronic devices because many students use them to access the readings instead of buying paper books. Electronic devices may only be used for the purposes of accessing course materials/note-taking and may not be used for non-academic purposes or other classes during lecture. Electronic devices must be silenced before the beginning of class.