

Introduction to Philosophy

(Honors Section)

Philosophy 103
Prof. Stephen Stich

Fall Term 2020

Syllabus – Part I: Information About the Course

This syllabus has two Parts. This part, Part I, contains a lot of information about the course, including information about the goals of the course, the online learning platforms, the grading system, the attendance policy, and the policy on cheating and plagiarism. You should read Part I carefully at the beginning of the term, and consult it again whenever you have questions about the course. If you can't find the answer to your question, Prof. Stich will be happy to help. Part II: *Topics and Readings* is a detailed list of the class topics and assigned readings, arranged by date. Part II may be revised and updated from time to time. You will be notified in class and by e-mail whenever a revised version of *Topics and Readings* is posted online.

Course Format Philosophy 103 is a **synchronous remote learning lecture and discussion course**. The class will meet on ZOOM on Mondays & Wednesdays, from 4:30 to 5:50 PM.

Core Curriculum Information

Philosophy 103 has been certified by the faculty as meeting the following SAS Core Curriculum requirement: Arts and Humanities: Philosophical and Theoretical Issues (AHo).

A bit of bureaucratic gobbledygook required by Rutgers: Assessment will be by an SAS generic rubric embedded in the evaluation criteria laid out in this syllabus. (Don't worry if you don't know what this means. Stich doesn't either.)

The Goals of the Course

The course has three goals.

1) To acquaint students with some of the important positions and arguments on a number of central questions in Western philosophy. Those questions include:

- i) Does God exist?
- ii) Can we trust our senses to learn about the world around us?
- iii) What justification do we have for our predictions about the future?
- iv) What is a person? What is required for a person to continue to exist in the future? Is life after death possible?
- v) What is a mind? How is the mind related to the brain? Is it possible for a computer to think and to be conscious?
- vi) Do we have free will?

- vii) What do moral claims mean? Are there correct and incorrect answers to moral questions?
 - viii) How should a moral person behave? What sorts of things are intrinsically valuable?
 - ix) Is race a social construction, or an illusion, or ... what?
- 2) To improve students' skills in analyzing and criticizing arguments both verbally and in writing.
- 3) To improve students' skills in explaining and defending their own philosophical views, both verbally and in writing.

Important Note About E-mail

You will be getting lots of e-mails about the course. These e-mails can only be sent to your official Rutgers e-mail address. So you should monitor that e-mail account frequently.

Sakai & Canvas

Since Prof. Stich has used Sakai for many years, Sakai will be one of the learning platforms used in the course. But, since Rutgers is now (slowly!) transitioning to Canvas, there will also be a Canvas site for the course. Prof. Stich will try to ensure that everything available on Sakai is also available on Canvas. To access Sakai go to: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/>. To access Canvas go to: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>.

Grading

Grading in a remote learning course poses unique challenges. So the grading scheme below should be regarded as *tentative* and open to revision as we learn what works and what doesn't in our current unprecedented environment.

- 1) **2 Papers** (Each paper will be 30% of your course grade)
The target length for each paper is about 2000 words. But this is VERY flexible. Topics and due dates will be announced well in advance.
- 2) **2 Oral Exams** (Each oral exam will be 20% of your course grade)
The oral midterm exams will be scheduled on October 21, 22 & 23. The oral final exam will be scheduled during final exams week. The questions on the oral exams will be chosen from a list distributed well in advance. Exams will be on Zoom.
- 3) **Class Participation** (For extra credit)
Students who participate in class discussion actively and constructively will get substantial extra credit in calculating their grade for the course.

Attendance Policy

Attendance statement required by Rutgers: “Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.”

OK. Now that you have read the statement required by Rutgers, here is an explanation of how attendance will be handled in this course. Once again, this is very tentative and subject to revision as we learn more about teaching and learning in our unprecedented environment.

Everyone is expected to join the class meeting on time and to stay, with your video camera on, for the full 80 minutes. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Students who are more than 5 minutes late will be counted as absent for that day. Students who leave before the end of the class will also be counted as absent for that day. The first two absences will be penalty-free. Each additional absence will result in one point being deducted from your final course grade (on the 40 point scale used in this course).

Office Hours

Prof. Stich will be scheduling lots of online office hours each week. You can sign up for an office hour appointment using the Canvas Calendar Scheduling tool.

Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism

The policy on cheating and plagiarism in this course is very simple. **If you cheat or plagiarize you will fail the course.** You will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Early in the term, we’ll discuss how plagiarism rules are interpreted at Rutgers. It is important to keep in mind that if you use material from an on-line source, or any other source, you *must* acknowledge this and provide a reference to the source. Changing a few words in the material that you have borrowed does *not* exempt you from this requirement. For additional information on the Rutgers University policies on academic integrity, go to <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.