

Syllabus for PHIL 104 – Introduction to Philosophy
Taught by Justin Kalef, Rutgers University, Spring 2016

This course satisfies the following Core Curriculum Goals: Philosophical and Theoretical Issues (AHo), Writing and Communication in a Discipline (WCd), and Writing and Communication, Revision (WCr).

Contact information: The easiest way to contact me outside of class is by email, at jkalef@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Office hours: Your recitation leader will hold weekly office hours and will inform you of their time and location. I will also hold office hours: mine will run from 11:00am to 1:00am on Wednesdays in my office (5th Floor, 106 Somerset Street, Office 546).

Texts: There are two texts for this course:

- James and Stuart Rachels' *Problems from Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, and
- Janis Bell's *Clean, Well-Lighted Sentences*. These texts are both **required**. **Students who do not secure access to these texts early on should not expect to pass the course.**

Students will also need to purchase four-month 'Rationale Extra' subscriptions to the online argument mapping service, Rationale, at the discounted rate of \$5 per subscription. Details will follow.

Topic and purpose of course: This course aims to introduce students to the arguments and methods of philosophical inquiry through an exploration of a number of philosophical issues of general interest. In addition to grappling philosophically with these questions (e.g. Does God exist? Can we survive the death of our physical bodies? Do we have free will? What can we know? Is morality objective? How should we live? What is the meaning of life?), students will learn to read, listen, reason, speak and write more clearly and precisely, to work effectively in teams, to be productively critical and self-critical, and to handle themselves and their work responsibly.

Assessment: You will have an opportunity to earn up to 1000 points in this course (not counting bonus points, which may in exceptional cases earn students a final total above 1000). This final score, divided by ten, will be your final percentage, and will be converted to a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A: 85-100 B+: 80-84 B: 70-79 C+: 65-69 C: 55-64 D: 50-54 F: 0-49

Points will be awarded for your performance on the following tasks, all of which will be explained in class and/or in future handouts:

<u>Work</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>
Warmup Quiz (January 28 th).....	12 points
Homework due February 1 st	10 points
Quiz on February 4 th	18 points
Homework due February 4 th	10 points
Homework due February 8 th	10 points
Homework due February 11 th /15 th	10 points
Homework due February 18 th	10 points
Homework due February 22 nd	10 points
Homework due February 25 th	10 points
Homework due February 29 th	10 points
Best 3 out of 4 Module Quizzes (Feb. 8 and 22, Mar. 7, Apr. 11).....	3 x 80 = 240 points
Peer Review	50 points
Final Exam.....	200 points
Mastery Portion (Argument mapping, forum work, and short assignments):	
Completing Level 1 (after passing Level 0).....	Exactly 150 points
Completing Level 2 (after passing Level 1).....	Exactly 50 points
Completing Level 3 (after passing Level 2).....	Up to 200 points
Total	1000 points

Possible Bonus Points

Grammar bonus points.....	up to 30 points
Bonus points for answering peer questions.....	up to 40 points
Bonus points for questions <i>asked</i> in the forum	up to 30 points
Games bonus (November 23 rd only).....	up to ??? points

Schedule:

Module 0: Preliminaries

Thursday, January 21st: Introduction to the course.

Home preparation for January 25th:

- do the Grammar Self-Test (on the left sidebar on our Sakai site)
- get copies of the Rachels text and the Bell text.

Monday, January 25th: Arguments, and why they're useful; course norms.

Readings for January 28th: the Appendix in Rachels, the Jim Pryor handouts on arguments (under 'Resources'), and everything up to the end of Chapter 2 in Bell.

Thursday, January 28th: Identifying and mapping arguments

**** WARMUP QUIZ AT THE START OF CLASS**

Readings for February 1st: Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in Bell.

Monday, February 1st: More advanced argument mapping. Also: attempts to avoid reasoning.

**** HOMEWORK ON BASIC ARGUMENT MAPPING DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Reading for February 4th: Chapter 1 in Rachels, Chapters 6 and 7 in Bell.

Thursday, February 4th: Introducing philosophy; examining Socrates' arguments for obeying the law; how to map objections

**** HOMEWORK ON OBJECTIONS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

**** QUIZ AT THE START OF CLASS**

Reading for February 8th: Chapter 2 in Rachels.

Module 1: God

Monday, February 8th: Arguments for the existence of God, Part I: the design argument. Also: the importance of clear definitions.

**** MODULE QUIZ AT THE START OF CLASS**

**** ADVANCED ARGUMENT MAPPING HOMEWORK DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Thursday, February 11th: Arguments for the existence of God, Part II; the cosmological and ontological arguments.

**** 1ST ROUND OF 'ORIGINAL ARGUMENT' HOMEWORK DUE ON SAKAI BEFORE THE START OF CLASS**

Reading for February 15th: Chapter 3 in Rachels.

**** 2ND ROUND OF 'ORIGINAL ARGUMENT' HOMEWORK DUE ON SAKAI BEFORE THE START OF CLASS ON THE 15TH**

Monday, February 15th: Arguments against the existence of God, Part I; the burden of proof, and its relevance to the argument from suffering. Also: ontological parsimony.

Thursday, February 18th: Arguments against the existence of God, Part II; debating the existence of God.

**** HOMEWORK ON OBJECTIONS AND DEFENSES DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Reading for February 22nd: Chapters 8 and 9 in Rachels.

Module 2: Free Will

Monday, February 22nd: Free Will, Part I.

**** MODULE QUIZ AT START OF CLASS**

**** HOMEWORK ON 'CORRECTING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONFUSED' DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Thursday, February 25th: Free Will, Part II. Also: the divide-and-conquer strategy, plus further advances in argument mapping.

**** FIRST-ROUND PEER REVIEWS DUE BY EMAIL TO YOUR RECITATION LEADER BY THE START OF CLASS ON THE 29TH**

Monday, February 29th: Free Will, Part III. Also: what if determinism is false? Debate on free will.

Thursday, March 3rd: Free Will, Part IV. Also: good writing and its evaluation

**** GRADING EXERCISE HOMEWORK DUE AT START OF CLASS**

Reading for March 7th: Chapters 4 and 6.1 in Rachels.

Module 3: Mind

Monday, March 7th: Substance dualism and its difficulties. Plus: the fallacy of equivocation and its relation to the knowledge argument.

**** MODULE QUIZ AT START OF CLASS**

Thursday, March 10th: Evaluating the case for reincarnation and other weird things. Also: our error-prone minds, and Hume's method for evaluating testimony.

Reading for March 21st: the rest of Chapter 6 and all of Chapter 10 in Rachels.

Monday, March 21st: Understanding consciousness. Also: plagiarism, and how to avoid it.

**** SUMMARIZING HOMEWORK DUE AT START OF CLASS**

Thursday, March 24th: Glue stick and paper exercise: improving your writing.
**** HOMEWORK DUE AT START OF CLASS**

Reading for March 28th: Chapter 7 in Rachels.

Monday, March 28th: Artificial intelligence

Thursday, March 31st: The bewildering mysteries of other minds

Reading for April 4th: Chapter 5 in Rachels.

**** SECOND-ROUND PEER REVIEWS DUE BY THE START OF
CLASS ON MONDAY THE 4TH (BY EMAIL TO YOUR RECITATION
LEADER)**

Monday, April 4th: Personal identity over time.

Module 4: Morality and Meaning

Thursday, April 7th: Laying the groundwork for ethics: description and prescription

Reading for April 11th: Chapter 11 in Rachels.

Monday, April 11th: Getting clear on relativism; more advanced tips for short assignments

**** MODULE QUIZ AT START OF CLASS**

Thursday, April 14th: More about relativism

Reading for April 18th: Chapter 12 in Rachels.

Monday, April 18th: The Great Day of Games.

**** BONUS POINTS AVAILABLE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS!**

Home preparation for April 21st:

- Contribute to collective wiki on utilitarianism.
- (Recommended) try the practice final exam, and check your score.

Thursday, April 21st: Utilitarianism and tables of arguments

Reading for April 25th: Chapter 13 in Rachels.

(Recommended: Watch the movie *The Queen of Versailles*.)

Monday, April 25th: The meaning of life

Home preparation: prepare final review questions for your final recitation.

Thursday, April 28th: Faith

**** FINAL PEER REVIEW DUE BY THE START OF CLASS ON
MONDAY THE 2ND (BY EMAIL TO YOUR RECITATION LEADER)**

Monday, May 2nd: Skepticism

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Thursday, May 5, 2016,

8:00 AM - 11:00 AM:

FINAL EXAM!

Don't leave town on or before the 5th!

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