

Introduction to philosophy:

ICC Auditorium, T & TH 9-9:50

Bryce Huebner

lbh24@georgetown.edu

Office hours (234 New North):

M 13:00-15:00; by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Paul Cudney

pbc24@georgetown.edu

020-08, M 9:00, Mag 103

020-09, M 10:00, Mag 103

Francisco Gallegos

ftgallegos@gmail.com

020-01, Th 16:00, ICC 210b

020-04, Fri 11:00, Mag 103

Nabina Liebow

nkl8@georgetown.edu

020-05, Fri 9:00, Car Barn 306

020-07, Fri 10:00, Mag 103

Oren Magid

omm6@georgetown.edu

020-02, Th 16:00, Walsh 494b

020-10, Th 17:00, Mag 103

Laura Schwartz

ls998@georgetown.edu

020-03, Th 17:00, ICC 219a

020-06, Th 18:00, Walsh 491a

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY: One goal of philosophy is to help us “understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term” (Sellars, *Philosophy and the scientific image of man*). In beginning to work on this difficult task, we will focus on three distinct but related questions: “What can we know?”; “What should we do?”; “What can we hope for?”. We will read papers by philosophers, scientists, and authors of fiction, each of whom attempts to answer at least one of these questions. We will also examine the ways that these questions become crystalized when socially situated agents engage in revolutionary action and political dissent aimed at constructing a better world.

COURSE GOALS: Our goal is to help you to develop tools that will help you to answer the hard theoretical questions that arise in philosophy and in your broader engagements with the world. The class is designed to help you learn to read more carefully, interpret difficult arguments, and critically assess the claims that other people make. In the large lectures, you will be exposed to the (sometimes) unfamiliar issues that arise in philosophy; in discussion sections, your TA will work with you to develop the skills required to *do philosophy*. If you work hard, you will improve your ability to understand and critically assess difficult arguments, and you will begin to develop and defend your own positions on difficult philosophical issues.

REQUIRED MATERIALS: All assigned readings will be uploaded to BlackBoard. You only need to buy an iClicker or the webClicker application for your smartphone.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES: You will receive 50 additional points so long as you turn in at least one reaction paper, at least one short paper, a short paper revision, and a final paper. This will not be enough to get a good grade in the course. To do that, you will need to score some more points:

<i>Reaction Papers</i>	Briefly explain a view advanced by Bostrom (1/29), Russell (2/5), Descartes (2/19), or Turing (2/26). Maximum 500 words; 1-3 points per paper; Maximum 2 attempts
<i>Short Papers</i>	Write a brief critical response to an argument advanced by Bennett (3/26), Thoreau (4/9), or King (4/9). Maximum 700 words; 4-6 points per paper; Maximum 2 attempts
<i>Short paper Revision</i>	Revise and extend one <i>short paper</i> , then develop a brief reply to the criticism you have developed in your short paper (4/23). Maximum 500 additional words; 4-6 points
<i>Final Paper</i>	Write a short paper that offers a brief explanation of a view we have discussed in class, a criticism of that view, and a response to that criticism. You may use a short revised paper. Maximum 1500 words; 7-9 points
<i>Clickers</i>	10 responses: 1 point; 15 responses: 3 points; 20 responses: 5 points. There will also be some <i>difficult</i> bonus questions in class that you can bet points on.
<i>Discussion Sections</i>	Participate in the class discussion: 1 point; Ask a thoughtful, philosophically relevant question in discussion sections: 2 points.
<i>Extra Credit:</i>	Be the first to find a video clip that is relevant for discussion sections (3 points; Max 6 points); Be the first to find a song that is relevant to an upcoming lecture (3 points; Max 6 points). Each submission must include a link to the clip or song; and each must be accompanied by a 100-150 word explanation of <i>why</i> it is relevant, which will be presented to the class.

ANONYMOUS GRADING: Your papers will be submitted for anonymous grading, with no identifying information other than your GUID#. **If you include additional identifying information, your work will not be graded.** There is a wealth of psychological data suggesting that subtle, often implicit prejudices can influence the evaluation of a paper merely on the basis of a person's name. Our hope, in adopting an anonymous grading strategy, is to guarantee as far as possible that grading is carried out in a way that is fair and reasonable. Since your name will never appear on your papers, this means that they will always be graded on the basis of the words that are on the page, focusing on the clarity and accuracy of the presentation and the strength of the evidence that you present for the claims that you make.

LATE PAPER AND MAKE-UP POLICY: The deadlines for turning in papers are firm. You have some latitude in deciding which papers to write, so no extensions will be given unless you provide a documented excuse. Note: this is a good reason for *not* waiting to write only the last papers in a paper group. Late papers will automatically be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late.

GRADING CRITERIA FOR PAPERS: In general, a paper that exhibits a 1) clear articulation of the claims that are being defended, 2) is well organized, 3) relies on clear evidence and arguments in support of these claims, and 4) is stylistically clear—thereby presenting a clear and well structured argument—will receive maximum points. A paper that is weaker in one of these areas—but still satisfactory—will lose 1 point; a paper that is weak in one or two of these categories will lose 2 points.

APPEALING A GRADE: You are welcome to appeal any grade that you do not feel accurately represents the work that you have done. However, all appeals for reevaluation must be made in writing, and must provide a compelling argument for raising the grade; appeals must be made no more than two weeks after your paper is returned. We will do our best to return papers promptly; out of fairness, you will do your best to make any appeals for re-evaluation in a timely manner. NB: the agreement to re-evaluate can result in three distinct outcomes: 1) raising the grade; 2) lowering the grade; or, 3) making no change to the grade. A re-evaluation is no guarantee of a better grade and can even result in a lower grade if you do not offer a compelling case for raising your grade.

USE OF EXTERNAL RESOURCES: To succeed in this course, you will need to learn how to read and reason carefully; you will also need to learn how to recover arguments from difficult texts. However, you will not need to read anything beyond what has been assigned in order to do well in this class—indeed, seeking out sources of information on your own (e.g., Sparknotes and Wikipedia) can have deleterious effects on your performance, since these sources do not always offer a reliable reconstruction of the arguments that we will address. We can recommend further readings if you need them, but you will often be better served by discussing your paper with Professor Huebner or your TA. The best way to develop philosophical skills is through collaboration and discussion. Beyond trying to clarify your thoughts by thinking out-loud in discussion sections, and beyond asking questions in class, you may also want to get together in small groups to think through the issues that we have been discussing outside of class; alternatively, you might want to tweet about your philosophical thoughts or argue about the texts that you have been reading with your friends on Twitter or Facebook. All of this is perfectly acceptable and likely to be helpful in understanding these philosophical texts. People have very different styles of thinking and learning; and you should use whatever resources suit you best in order to develop the skills that you need for succeeding in this class.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Keeping this in mind, when it comes time for you to write your papers, you must use the skills that you have developed by thinking through the relevant issues on your own. You have all signed the Georgetown University Honor pledge and have agreed to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. We expect you to be familiar with both the letter and the spirit of the pledge, and we will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The Honor Code applies to all of the relevant aspects of this course and it is the responsibility of every student in this class to inform herself or himself of the relevant principles and to abide by them throughout the semester. Of course, the key to avoiding any dire consequences is to think for yourself, and do your own work on the papers.

THE WRITING CENTER: The writing center provides one-on-one assistance at various stages of the writing process. All writers, even the most accomplished, can benefit from their assistance on issues as diverse as topic development, organization, and general strategies for revising. To make an appointment, see <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DIFFERING ABILITIES: If you are on record with the university as requiring special accommodations, please stop by my office and let me know in confidence within the first two weeks of the semester. If you find, during the course of the semester, that special accommodations are required, please bring me the relevant documentation from the university as soon as possible.

CELL PHONES AND COMPUTERS: Be sure to turn off the ringers on your cell phones when you come to class; if you forget and it rings, turn it off immediately. If you chose to use the webClicker application rather than an iClicker, please limit your use of your smartphone to class-relevant actions. Please do not bring a computer to class. Unfortunately, there are too many people use their computers for non-academic purposes in these big lecture courses. This distracts others and creates an environment in which it is difficult for others to learn.

MIND YOUR MANNERS: While philosophy is best done collectively and collaboratively, some of the questions that we will be discussing are also likely to generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms—that is at least part of what doing philosophy is about. However, in discussing, disagreeing, criticizing, and arguing, we must also make an effort to remain courteous and respectful to one another. We promise to do our best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members of this class. But, we will only be able to do this if each of you helps to create an atmosphere where we can all develop our ideas in a friendly and welcoming environment where we all learn from one another. Perhaps more importantly, if you want to disagree with someone, or if you want to offer a criticism of their viewpoint, be sure to offer reasons for the approach that you are suggesting. If we reason through things together, we are sure to have a good semester!

TENTATIVE COURSE READING SCHEDULE: We may not get through all of the readings for this class, and it is OK if we don't. We might find things that are interesting, or things we want to dwell on. If so, we will adjust the reading schedule to accommodate our interests. If we are moving too fast or too slow, please speak up and let us know!

10 Jan	Why Should We Do Philosophy?
15-17 Jan	Tolstoy , <i>The death of Ivan Illyich</i> Epicurus , "Letter to Menoeceus"
22-24 Jan	Bostrom , "Are we living in a simulation" Chalmers , "The Matrix as metaphysics"
29-31 Jan	Russell , "Memory"; Loftus , "Creating false memories" Neisser , "John Dean's memory"
5-7 Feb	Locke & Reid Excerpts on personal identity Dennett , "Where am I"
12-14 Feb	Turing , The imitation game Searle , The Chinese room
19-21 Feb	Descartes Excerpts on animals Wallace , "Consider the lobster"
26-28 Feb	Clark , "Natural born cyborgs?" Savulescu , "Genetic enhancement"
12-14 March	Plato , Meno
19-21 March	Le Guin , "The ones who walk away from Omelas" Bennett , "The conscience of Huckleberry Finn"
26 March	Zimbardo , "The social psychology of good and evil"
2-4 April	Thoreau , "Civil Disobedience" King "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
9-11 April	Goldman , "Anarchism: What it really stands for" Malcolm X "The Ballot or the Bullet"; Carmichael , "Black Power"
16-18 April	Fanon , "Reciprocal Bases of National Culture" Bartky , "Psychological Oppression"
23-25 April	Young , "From Guilt to solidarity" Lyons "Courage and political resistance"