PHIL 13185-03: Philosophy University Seminar Philosophy in the 21^{st} Century

Fall 2020

Instructor:	Corey Dethier	Email:	cdethier@nd.edu
Class:	TR 2:20-3:35	Office Hours:	M 12:15-3:00
	DeBartolo 117		(or appointment)

Course Description: The goal of this course is to offer students an introduction to philosophy, and particularly to philosophy as it is practiced in the 21st Century. Particular attention will be paid to issues that are relevant outside the philosophy classroom, such as limits on free speech, differences in identity, scientific knowledge, and medical ethics. As this course is a University Seminar, there will also be significant focus on writing skills and—to the extent possible while maintaining social distancing—class discussions.

Course Aims:

- To develop the ability to critically engage with philosophy.
- To develop an understanding of the questions asked by contemporary philosophers and the methods employed in answering those questions
- To provide a foundation of reading, writing, and communication skills appropriate both for higher-level philosophy courses and reasoning in other domains.
- To demonstrate the relevance of philosophy of various contemporary issues.
- To encourage a life-long appreciation for philosophical investigation.

Texts: Most readings will be uploaded as PDFs to the Sakai website for the course (here); the exceptions are all online materials, and a link will be provided for these.

Grades:

The grading scale will be as follows: A (94+), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76), C- (70-73), D (60-69), F (0-59)

Final grades in the class will be divided into the following categories:

- 5% Class participation. Obviously, participation is health permitting. Ill students will be excused from participation expectations for the duration of their illness.
- 35% Reading responses. Throughout the semester, students will be asked to turn in short reading responses approximately once a week. These responses will usually consist of 2-3 questions on the readings for that week. An example question might be: "What is Mill's argument against restricting free speech?" As part of the reading responses, students will also frequently be asked to discuss the readings with other students outside of class (this can be achieved via email, zoom, in-person meetings, etc.), and to then report on what they gained from these discussions.

Each reading response is worth 5% of the grade, and each is due at 11:59 pm Wednesday night. The grade of the worst reading response will be dropped in determining the final grade.

60% Short Papers. During the course of the semester, students will be asked to write three short papers (approximately 6-8 pages each) about a subject that we discussed in the course. I will provide you with two to three prompts that you can choose between; students desiring to address alternative essay topics should set up a meeting to discuss the possibility with me. As an example, a prompt might consist in:

A program at your university has invited a controversial speaker to give a talk, but many faculty members and students oppose the move on the grounds that the speaker's views or arguments are objectionable. Supposing that you agree that the views in question are objectionable, please write a short essay in which you answer each of the following questions: (1) What is the strongest argument in favor of the university ignoring the student and faculty protests? (2) What is the strongest argument in favor of the university refusing to host the talk? (3) Which of these do you think is the more compelling argument, and why?

Each paper is worth 20% of the grade; I will hand out a rubric with the initial paper assignments. At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to re-write one of their papers in response to my comments; rewrites will be due on Friday, Nov. 20.

Course policies: In addition to the honor code (http://firstyear.nd.edu/current-students/honor-code/), which students are expected to learn and follow, I will expect students to (a) be respectful of their fellow students, (b) turn their assignments in on time, and (c) behave ethically both in class and in fulfilling their assignments.

I also encourage all students to feel free to come to office hours and/or contact me by email with any questions about the course, the readings, or philosophy more generally.

Schedule:

Date	Reading (please see reading schedule for page assignments)	Assignment due		
Free Speech				
T 08.11	No readings			
H 08.13	J.S. Mill - On Liberty			
T 08.18	Anderson - Private Government			
H 08.20	Malik - We Need New Stories	RR1		
T 08.25	Oreskes & Conway - Merchants of Doubt			
H 08.27	McKinnon - "Epistemic Injustice"	RR2		
T 09.01	Teichman - "Freedom of Speech and the Public Platform"			
H 09.03	Brennan & Jaworski - Markets Without Limits	RR3		
Ethics and Medicine				
T 09.08	Rachels - The Elements of Moral Philosophy			
H 09.10	Moral Machine Quiz (online)	SP1		
T 09.15	Thomson - "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"			
H 09.17	Fritz & Fuld - "Ethical Issues Surrounding Do Not Resuscitate"	RR4		
T 09.22	Plutynski - "Safe or Sorry? Cancer Screening and Inductive Risk"			
H 09.24	Press - "A Preventable Cancer is on the Rise in Alabama"	RR5		
T 09.29	Buchanan - "Public Health Interventions"			
H 10.01	Friedman - "Coronavirus and the Crisis of Trust" (online)	RR6		

Date I	Reading ((please see	reading	schedule	for page	assignments) Assignment due
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Philosophy and Identity

T 10.06	Dennett - Brainstorms	
H 10.08	Barash - Buddhist Biology	SP2
T 10.13	Dembroff & Saint-Croix - "'Yep, I'm Gay'"	
H 10.15	Barnes - The Minority Body	RR7
T 10.20	Haslanger - "The Sex-Gender Distinction"	
H 10.22	Spencer - "A More Radical Solution to the Race Problem"	RR8
T 10.27	Blum - I'm not a Racist, But	
H 10.29	Coates - "The Case for Reparations"	RR9

Scientific Knowledge

T 11.03	O'Connor & Weatherall - The Misinformation Age	
H 11.05	Solomon - Social Empiricism	SP3
T 11.10	Douglas - "The Moral Responsibilities of Scientists"	
H 11.12	No readings	