

Instructor: Daniel Greco

Office: 451 College Street, 313a

Office hours: TTh, 1:15-2:15 or by appointment (just send me an email).

Summer 2025

1 Course Description

The course has two goals. First, to give you a sense of what philosophers think about and why. Here we look at a number of perennial philosophical problems, including: the existence of God, skeptical challenges to our knowledge of the external world, the nature and possibility of free will, how a person remains the same over time as their bodily and psychological traits change, and what (if anything) makes right acts right. The second goal is to get you thinking philosophically yourself. This will help you develop your critical and argumentative skills more generally. Readings will be both from late, great classical authors and influential contemporary figures.

As classes are three hours and fifteen minutes long, they'll be broken into a lecture at the beginning, and two separate discussion periods (one large seminar-style discussion, and a separate period of small group discussions), with breaks in between.

2 Assignments

There will be a writing assignment due every week of the course on Friday. They will be two short argument analyses (1-2 pages each), a midterm paper (5-6 pages), and a final paper (5-6 pages), for which students will submit a draft on the penultimate Friday. Each argument analysis will count for 15% of the final grade, the midterm paper for 20%, the final paper for 30%, and participation in class discussion for 20%. Attendance is mandatory.

The assignments will be posted in the "Assignments" section of the canvas site for the class, and should be submitted according to the instructions posted there.

3 Reading Schedule

There will be no textbook for the class; readings will be available online in the "files" section of the [Canvas](#) site for the course, or occasionally linked from this pdf. Please come to the first class having done the July 1 readings.

3.1 Epistemology

Tuesday July 1: Skepticism about the External World

- Editors of the Norton Introduction to Philosophy: A Brief Guide to Logic and Argumentation (skills reading)
- René Descartes, "First Meditation"
- Barry Stroud, "The Problem of the External World"

Thursday July 3: Induction

- Olivia Bailey, “But how do I participate?” (skills reading)
- David Hume: excerpt from [An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding](#)—read part I of section IV (Part II recommended but optional).
- Nelson Goodman, “The New Riddle of Induction”
- **Optional videos:** Daniel Greco: [Hume’s Skepticism, Part I](#) and [Hume’s Skepticism, Part II](#).

Friday July 4: **Argument Analysis 1 Due**

Tuesday July 8: The Ethics of Belief

- Editors of the Norton Introduction to Philosophy: Paper Writing Guidelines (skills reading)
- William James, “[The Will to Believe](#)”
- W.K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
- Blaise Pascal, “The Wager” (excerpt from *Pensées*)

3.2 Metaphysics

Thursday July 10: God

- David Hume: parts ii-v of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
- William Paley *Natural Theology* (excerpt) (to read it, you should download it and open it with a pdf reader—just clicking on it and trying to read it in your browser may not work)
- John Hick, “The Problem of Evil”

Friday July 11: **Argument Analysis 2 Due**

Tuesday July 15: Free Will

- Roderick Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”
- Daniel Dennett, chapters 1 (Please Don’t Feed the Bugbears) and 6 (Could Have Done Otherwise) of *Elbow Room*
- Derk Pereboom, “Why We Have No Free Will and Can Live Without It”

Thursday July 17: Personal Identity

- René Descartes “Second Meditation”
- John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpt)
- Thomas Reid, “Of Mr. Locke’s Account of Personal Identity”

Friday July 18: **Mid-term Paper Due**

Tuesday July 22: Mind

- Gilbert Ryle, “Descartes’ Myth”
- Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”
- John Searle, “Minds, Brains, and Programs”

3.3 Morality

Thursday July 24: Consequentialism

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Chapter 2 and Chapter 5)
- Bernard Williams, “Against Utilitarianism”

Friday July 25: **Draft of Final Paper Due**

Tuesday July 29: Deontology

- Immanuel Kant, chapter two of *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Onora O’Neill, “Kant: Rationality as Practical Reason”

Thursday, July 31: Challenges to Morality

- Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism”
- Susan Wolf “Moral Saints”

Friday, August 1: **Final Paper Due**