
COURSE SYLLABUS

This course on philosophy and persons explores what a person is as a social, scientific and moral being. We will explore some “big questions”, including

- “What are we and how do we know?”
- “Where does our value as persons come from?”
- “Do we have free will?”

Students will identify, analyze and test assumptions and beliefs about what persons are, and develop a more deeply informed understanding of their social encounters, and of themselves. Over the semester the course will engage the subject in three areas: persons and knowledge, persons and value, and persons and reality.

Learning outcomes: Students will be able to identify and articulate historical and contemporary philosophical concepts and produce arguments for their own views on the relationship between philosophy and persons in three keys: persons and value, persons and knowledge, and persons and reality. Students will also become familiar with the characteristics of a good knower, like self-reflectiveness, benevolence and objectivity.

The knowledge and skills used in this course are cultivated through individual and in-class readings, written assignments, and group discussions in class and online.

This course fulfills the following CORE requirements: Philosophical Knowledge

Required texts: Students are responsible for having read texts in preparation for each class meeting, and for bringing the relevant texts to class on the appropriate day, including those that are made available online.

Available at Loyola University bookstore:

- Daniel Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (Penguin, 2003)
- Harry Frankfurt, *On Truth* (Knopf, 2006)

Available on Sakai (sakai.luc.edu):

- Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963) and “Beyond Vietnam” (1967)
- Second Continental Congress, “Declaration of Independence” (1776)
- Aaron Swartz, “Look at yourself objectively” from the *Raw Nerve* series (2012)
- David Hume, selections from *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748)
- Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (1784)
- Alistair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, People” (2004)
- David Desser, “Blade Runner, Science Fiction and Transcendence” (1985)

Available on hold (in course reserves) at Cudahy Library:

- Blade Runner*, 1982 (film), directed by Ridley Scott.

A note about philosophy: A common misconception about philosophy (and philosophy courses) is that it is an arena in which people air their opinions and beliefs, all of which are equally valid simply because someone is committed to them. This misconception can cause difficulties when the holder of an opinion or belief is not prepared or inclined to examine or defend it. Yet that is precisely what philosophers do—we examine principles, beliefs and opinions (the best philosophers will test them, too). With this in mind, when you share your thoughts in class, 1) do *not* interpret an examination of your view as a personal attack; 2) engage with others who have questions about or criticisms of your position; and 3) maintain a civil tone at all times.

Location & Time: Lake Shore Campus, Cuneo #202, MWF 9:20am-10:10am.

Policy on attendance: This class requires significantly greater participation than most, so regular attendance is key to your success. You will continue to qualify for help outside of class provided that you have no more than six absences. Our class periods are short, so it is crucial to arrive on time, to have read the assigned texts, and to be prepared for discussion. Failure to do so will negatively affect your performance and, consequently, your grade.

Policies on electronic devices: Our classroom is a professional learning environment. No recording is permitted. All cellphones, pagers, handheld computer-phone hybrids, laptops and anything else that can ring, buzz, or beep will be placed on **SILENT** mode and put away before the start of class. We will be device-free. There will be no laptops, phones or tablets permitted during class. Scientific research demonstrating the advantages of handwriting notes over typing is plentiful. One valuable article by Mueller and Oppenheimer published in *Psychological Science*, “The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” is on Sakai under “Resources”, in the “Further Reading” folder.

Instructor information:

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Office hours: Crown 334, Tues & Thurs, 3-4pm and by appointment.

Office hours policies: Please make an appointment and arrive on time. In preparing for our time together, it will be helpful to arrive with a few questions already prepared.

Course Assignments and Grading:

Different learning modes are engaged in our course, including reading on one’s own, lecture, Q&A sessions, short essay exams, a variety of in-class and online discussions, and student reflection papers.

Exams: Three take-home exams make up 60% of the final grade. These assess your comprehension of the course material and philosophical skills acquisition. You will be asked to work closely with texts to identify philosophical claims, and to reconstruct philosophers’ arguments in your own words. As your skills develop, you will be tasked with identifying and articulating your own views and philosophical positions, and then presenting arguments in support of them.

Take-home exams must be typed in 12-point font and double-spaced. Each exam question will be given a grade. The assignment grade is an average of the grades earned on the questions. Answer each question separately and number it.

In order to assist your acquisition of these skills, you will not use direct quotations from the text, and you will make use of a simplified citation form.

Direct quotes from texts are not acceptable and will not be graded. However, citations must be provided at the points where you put a philosopher's ideas into your own words.

An example of proper citation:

Frankfurt argues that value judgments are made based on facts, like behaviors or actions taken. (OT 29)

Here OT identifies the work (*On Truth*) and 29 the page in text on which the idea I am explaining can be found (check for yourself!). Note that this sentence is not a direct quote from the text. Rather it paraphrases the main idea in the text. This is what you are being asked to do when working with texts: put the ideas into your own words.

All three take-home exams must be submitted to pass the course. You may choose to take the final exam *only* in order to drop your lowest exam grade. The final cannot replace an exam that was never submitted. In cases of academic dishonesty, students forfeit the option to drop the lowest exam grade.

Submission: Exams may be submitted in hard copy or on Sakai in .docx, .rtf or .pdf format on or before the start of class on the day that they are due. *Do not submit assignments via email.*

The exam portion of your grade is a straightforward average of your three best exam grades, graded A-F using the scale below. It is weighted at 60% of your total grade.

Familiarize yourself with the University's policy on academic dishonesty. It is published in the student handbook and it is available online. We are *all* held to this standard. There are no exceptions. Copying, plagiarism (including that which makes minor changes), purchasing papers, and borrowing papers is cheating. This is by no means an exhaustive list of what falls under academic dishonesty. Assignments that have been plagiarized will earn a grade of F and the student will be reported to the Dean.

Exam grading scale:

- A Excellent work shows a clear understanding of the material and includes definitions of the terms used without misrepresentation or error, and supports answers with examples and/or clarifies a position with arguments in a way that correctly analyzes the issue(s) at hand. (A question earning an A is worth 91-100 points. There is a range here: A- (91-93), A (94-96), A+ (97-100), and so on, for each letter grade)

- B Good work shows a clear understanding of the material and includes definitions of terms used without misrepresentation or error. (A question earning a B is worth 81-90 points)

- C Adequate work shows some understanding of the material that is generally free of misrepresentation or error. (A question earning a C is worth 71-80 points)
- D Poor work shows little understanding of the material, misrepresents a position and/or offers incorrect or inappropriate arguments. (A question earning a D is worth 61-70 points)
- F This grade is reserved for failure to answer a question. Be aware that this is NOT THE SAME AS ZERO points. It is a heavy penalty incurred for submitting an incomplete assignment. This encourages students to do their best to answer a question, since any answer attempted is far better than no answer at all. Never hesitate to do your best. (0 points)

Reflection papers: Reflection papers make up 20% of your final grade. These are short assignments of one full, single spaced page (that's about 500 words) that encourage the development of a more objective view of oneself and one's own learning process over time in the context of the theme of the course. This course focuses on persons and you all have the opportunity here to learn from yourselves and each other. Reflecting on your progress in the class gives you insight into how you learn best, how you deal with setbacks, and what you are gaining as you grow into new skills. This practice speaks to the goals of the course by making clear to you how your own experiences compare or contrast to the ideas we are studying.

These assignments are graded based on completion (full credit for completion, and no credit for non- or partial completion).

Submission: Reflections may be submitted in hard copy or on Sakai in .docx, .rtf or .pdf format on or before the start of class on the day that they are due. *Do not submit assignments via email.*

Tentative topics for reflection papers include:

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| Reflection #1 | <i>Writing Sample.</i> Goal: introduce yourself, your interests, and expectations. |
| Reflection #2 | Theme: Truth as a goal of philosophical inquiry. |
| Reflection #3 | Theme: Person as a scientific, social, and moral entity. |
| Reflection #4 | <i>Mid-Semester Self-Assessment.</i> Goal: Assess your development mid-course. |
| Reflection #5 | Theme: Of your choosing from a selection of topics we develop in class. |

Total number of reflection paper points possible: 20, weighted at 20% of your grade

Participation: Regular discussions are a major part of the course, indicated by the 20% participation portion of your final grade and regularly scheduled discussion sections. Students are required to arrive prepared to participate. Included in assessing participation are your involvement in class discussion, and whether you engage pertinent issues and indicate familiarity with the required texts. This kind of participation requires significantly more preparation than does silently warming a desk.

If you have difficulty speaking in front of a group, or if you are not sure how to contribute to discussions, contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Our courses are short, and it is common for the discussions we begin in class to continue online. Discussion in the course forums on Sakai is strongly encouraged and counts towards your participation grade, provided the discussion is on philosophical issues (and certainly not, for example, on campus gossip).

See *A note about philosophy* for discussion guidelines.

Total number of participation points possible: 20

The instructor reserves the right to make exceptions for students in extraordinary circumstances.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- 8/27 Syllabus & course regulations
- 8/29 Aaron Swartz, "Look at yourself objectively" (on Sakai)
- 8/31 Frankfurt, *On Truth*, Chapters I-III (pp. 1-48)

Week 2

- 9/3 **Labor Day Holiday – No classes**
- 9/5 Frankfurt, *On Truth*, Chapters IV-VI (pp. 49-101)
Writing sample due
- 9/7 Review & discussion section

Further reading: Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*
Aaron Swartz, *Raw Nerve* series

Week 3

- 9/10 Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (on Sakai)
- 9/12 King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (on Sakai)
- 9/14 Review & discussion

Further Reading: Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (on Sakai)
Thomas Paine, "The Rights of Man" (on Sakai)
Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation" (on Sakai)

Week 4

9/17	Select either “Declaration of Independence” (Second Constitutional Congress) or “Beyond Vietnam” (MLK, 1967) (On Sakai)
9/19	“Declaration of Independence” (Second Constitutional Congress) and “Beyond Vietnam” (MLK, 1967) (On Sakai)
9/21	Review & discussion <i>Reflection Paper #2 due</i>
Week 5	
9/24	Hume, <i>Inquiry</i> , Sections 1-4 (On Sakai)
9/26	Hume, <i>Inquiry</i> , Sections 7-9 (On Sakai)
9/28	Review and discussion <i>First exam due at the beginning of class.</i>
Week 6	
10/3	Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (on Sakai)
10/5	Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (on Sakai)
10/7	Review & discussion
<u>Further reading:</u>	G.V. Plekhanov, “On the Role of the Individual in History” (on Sakai)
Week 7	
10/8	Mid-Semester Break – No classes
10/10	Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, People” (selections)
10/12	Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, People” <i>Reflection #3 due.</i>
Week 8	
10/15	Review & discussion
10/17	Intro to philosophical issues in <i>Blade Runner</i>
10/19	Desser, “ <i>Blade Runner</i> , Science Fiction and Transcendence” <i>Mid-Semester Self-Assessment Due</i>
Week 9	
10/22	Desser, “ <i>Blade Runner</i> , Science Fiction and Transcendence”
10/24	Review & discussion

10/26	Introduction to Dennett <i>Second exam due at the beginning of class</i>
Week 10	
10/29	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 1 (pp. 1-23)
10/31	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 2 (pp. 25-62)
11/2	Review & discussion section <i>Reflection #5 due</i>
Week 11	
11/5	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 3 (pp. 63-95)
11/7	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 4 (pp. 97-139)
11/9	Review & discussion section
Week 12	
11/12	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 5 (pp. 141-167)
11/14	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 6 (pp. 169-220)
11/16	Review & discussion section <i>Third exam due at the beginning of class</i>
Week 13	
11/19	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch 7 (pp. 192-220)
11/21	Thanksgiving holiday – No classes
11/23	Thanksgiving holiday – No classes
Week 14	
11/26	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch 7 (pp. 192-220)
11/28	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 8 (pp. 221-257)
11/30	Review & discussion section
Week 15	
12/3	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch. 9 (pp. 259-288)
12/5	Dennett, <i>Freedom Evolves</i> , Ch 10 (pp. 289-309)
12/7	Review & discussion in preparation for final
Exam Week	
	Final exam: Saturday, December 15 @ 1 pm