



Philosophy 101 H5: Honors Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2017

Morton Hall 337

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 10:30am-11:25am

Professor: Jeremy Fischer
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Office Hours: MWF 11:30-12:00,
MW 2:30-3:00,
TR 4:00-4:30, & by apt.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to five central topics of philosophy: the mind, knowledge, language, science, and metaphysics. This course is designed to help students to develop their abilities to understand, to explain, and to critically analyze arguments.

Required Texts

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Thinking It Through: An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). All other texts are available online and can be downloaded from the course Canvas website.

Tips for Success

1. Attend each class with the assigned text in hand. Please arrive on time to avoid disrupting the class.
2. Read assigned texts before we discuss them in class. Be prepared to spend about five hours per week reading and studying outside of class. Lectures and discussions will presuppose that all students have read the relevant texts.
3. Discuss any questions you might have about your assignments with me before and after you complete them.

Evaluation

1. Five in-class quizzes (5 x 12% each = 60% of the course grade)
The quizzes—which will take place on September 1st, September 18th, October 13th, November 3rd, and December 4th—will consist of short concept identification questions and short essay questions.
2. 12 “Critical Reading” homework assignments (12 x 2% = 24% of the course grade)
These questions are designed to help you to critically read the class texts and to prepare for class. The questions are listed on the Schedule of Reading Assignments (see below). There is one question listed for each class. Each month you must submit at least two assignments—you pick which ones. You must submit your assignments through Canvas at least *one hour before class begins* on the day that that question is listed under. For example, if you decide to answer the question about Hobbes listed under Wednesday, September 20th, then your assignment must be submitted through Canvas by 9:30 am *on that day*. Answers should be about half a page long.
3. 12 “Murky Points” submissions (12 x 1% each = 12% of the course grade)
At the end of any class, you may submit written questions or comments about the content of that class period—especially about what was difficult or unclear, or what you disagree with. This is a way for you to get quick feedback (and to give me quick feedback!). Each good faith submission receives full credit. You may turn in only one submission per class.
4. Class participation (4% of the course grade)
Participation in class is strongly encouraged. Students may also earn participation credit by asking questions during office hours or via email with the professor.

Grading Scale

A+ = 96%	B+ = 87-89%	C+ = 77-79%	D+ = 67-69%
A = 93-95%	B = 83-86%	C = 73-76%	D = 63-66%
A- = 90-92%	B- = 80-82%	C- = 70-72%	D- = 60-62%

Students on the borderline of two grades will be bumped up only if they have completed all assignments and if the final exam reflects the higher score.

Policy on Late Assignments

Quizzes cannot be taken late, except in the event of a UAH-sponsored activity or a personal emergency. Paper assignments will be penalized by five percentage points for each day they are late, except in the event of a UAH-sponsored activity or a personal emergency.

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities should contact UAH's Disability Support Services at 256.824.1997, 256.824.6672 (Fax), or dssproctor@uah.edu. (Website: <http://www.uah.edu/health-and-wellness/disability-support>) If you have a letter from the Disability Services Office indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss accommodations for the class.

Plagiarism

Instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Director of Student Conduct at UAH for investigation. If an investigation confirms that plagiarism took place, then the assignment will receive a score of zero and the student will be subject to University penalties.

The following information summarizes UAH's understanding of plagiarism (from <http://libguides.uah.edu/plagiarism>):

"Plagiarism - failing to acknowledge our debts to others - is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information....

"Give credit whenever you use

- another person's idea, opinion, or theory.
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings - any pieces of information - that are not common knowledge.
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words.
- a paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words.

"Common types of plagiarism include

- quoting material from another source without making citation.
- citing only one source while combining materials from several.
- citing fake sources to hide the amount of quoting/paraphrasing or to shortcut finding all the sources used.
- changing the content of sources to make it sound more relevant.
- copying the general structure, argument, or techniques of a source without attribution."

Schedule of Reading Assignments
Philosophy 101 H5
Fall 2017

Week 1: Mind-Body Dualism

W 8.16: Appiah, pp. v-xvi

 "Contents"

 "Preface"

 "Introduction,"

HW Question: Look through the table of contents to Appiah's book (pages v-vii—I've posted a digital copy of this text in case you don't have your copy of the book yet). Which chapters are you most interested in learning about? Are there any topics that you wish were included but are missing from the book? Explain.

F 8.18: Appiah, pp. 1-12

 1.1 "Introduction"

 1.2 "Descartes: The beginnings of modern philosophy of mind"

 (1.3 is optional further reading, for curious students only.)

HW Question: Does the robot, M, that Appiah discusses on page 4 understand anything? Explain why or why not.

Week 2: Functionalism

M 8.21: Appiah, pp. 19-23

 1.4 "Computers as models of the mind"

 1.5 "Why should there be a functionalist theory?"

HW Question: How does functionalism answer the two questions that Appiah mentions at the beginning of section 1.5 (page 22)? Do you think that these are satisfying (or correct) answers? Explain.

W 8.23: Appiah, pp. 23-28

 1.6 "Functionalism: A first problem"

 1.7 A simple-minded functionalist theory of pain

 1.8 Ramsey's solution to the first problem

HW Question: In your own words, explain the "first problem" with functionalism. Ramsey's solution to this problem is difficult: which is the most confusing part of his solution for you? (Or, if you did not find it confusing at all, which part would you guess other students found confusing and how would you explain it to them?) Explain.

F 8.25: Appiah, pp. 28-38

 1.9 Functionalism: A second problem

 1.10 M again

 1.11 Consciousness

 1.12 The puzzle of the physical

 1.13 Conclusion

HW Question: What is the "second problem" with functionalism? Do you believe that this problem is solvable? Or do you think that it proves that functionalism is false? Explain.

Week 3: The Chinese Room Argument

M 8.28: John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (Available on Canvas)

HW Question: Explain Searle's Chinese Room example. What is this example supposed to show? Does it succeed in showing this?

W 8.30: Review/Catch-Up

F 9.1: Quiz #1

Week 4: Traditional Theories of Knowledge

M 9.4: Labor Day—No Classes

W 9.6: Appiah, pp. 39-53

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Plato: Knowledge as justified true belief

2.3 Descartes' way: Justification requires certainty

HW Question: Do you think it's at all *possible* that you are, like Albert (2.1), a disembodied brain in a vat that is hooked up to a computer? (Or, more generally, do you think it's possible that you are in some way *radically* mistaken about the world?) If so, does that possibility suggest that you don't know anything about the world? Explain why.

F 9.8: Appiah, pp. 53-61

2.4 Locke's way: Justification can be less than certain

2.5 The foundations of knowledge

(2.6 is optional further reading, for curious students only.)

HW Question: If you had to pick between Descartes's theory of knowledge and Locke's theory of knowledge, which would you pick? Explain.

Week 5: Causal Theories of Knowledge

M 9.11: Appiah, pp. 66-73

2.7 Ways around skepticism II: Causal theories of knowledge

2.8 Causal theories contrasted with traditional accounts

NOTE: IN THIS SECTION, APPIAH WRITES 'PDJ' WHEN HE MEANS TO WRITE 'DEDUCTIVE CLOSURE PRINCIPLE' (DCP)! HERE'S A REMINDER OF WHAT THE DCP STATES: "for any two sentences, A and B, if you know A and know B, and if from A and B, together, C follows logically, then if you believe C, you know C" (49).

HW Question: Do you agree with Gettier that Smith doesn't have knowledge? Explain why.

W 9.13: Appiah, pp. 74-78

2.9 Epistemology naturalized

2.10 Conclusion

HW Question: If we "naturalize" epistemology, Appiah says, then "we can see the tradition of phenomenological approaches to justification as a series of hypotheses about what processes are most likely to produce true belief" (76). What is the main hypothesis of Empiricism? What is the main hypothesis of Rationalism? If you were forced to choose, which hypothesis would you bet on? Why?

F 9.15: Review/Catch-Up

Week 6: Philosophy of Language

M 9.18: Quiz #2

W 9.20: Appiah, pp. 79-87

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The linguistic turn
- 3.3 The beetle in the box

HW Question: What is Hobbes's theory of what is involved in understanding a sentence? Explain one of the objections to Hobbes's theory that Appiah discusses. Is this a good objection? Explain.

F 9.22: Appiah, 87-92

- 3.4 Frege's "sense" and "reference."
- 3.5 Predicates and open sentences—FIRST PARAGRAPH ONLY

HW Question: Using the names, "Superman" and "Clark Kent," explain the difference between sense and reference.

Week 7: Science

M 9.25: Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," especially 699-706 (Available on Canvas)

HW Question: Explain why the Twin Earth science fiction stories leads Putnam to this conclusion: "Cut the pie any way you like, "meanings" just ain't in the *head!*" (704).

W 9.27: Appiah, 127-136

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Description and prescription
- 3.3 An example: Gregor Mendel's genetic theory.

HW Question: What is the demarcation problem? Think about this problem for a moment, and then explain how you would solve (or answer) this problem.

F 9.29: Appiah, 136-148

- 3.4 Theory and observation.
- 3.5 The received view of theories.
- 3.6 The deductive-nomological model of explanation.

HW Question: Why did Carl Hempel call his theory "the deductive-nomological theory of explanation"? Explain what these words mean and give an example of an explanation that this theory would approve of.

Week 8: Justifying Scientific Theories 1

M 10.2: Appiah, 148-157

- 3.7 Theory reduction and instrumentalism
- 3.8 Theory-ladenness

HW Question: What does Appiah mean by "theory reduction"? Give an example of theory reduction.

W 10.4: Appiah, 157-161

- 3.9 Justifying theories I: The problem of induction
(4.10 is optional further reading, for curious students only.)

HW Question: What is "inductivism"? Make sure to explain all of the fancy terminology that Appiah uses when he defines this term. Use an example to illustrate your answer.

F 10.6: Appiah, 163-167

- 4.11 Justifying theories II: Popper and falsification

HW Question: Is falsificationism the same theory as inductivism? Explain.

Week 9: Justifying Scientific Theories 2

M 10.9: Appiah, 167-171

4.12 Justifying theories III: Inference to the best explanation

HW Question: What is it for a theory to be simple? What is it for a theory to be explanatorily powerful? Does the fact that a theory explains something very simply and powerfully give us a reason to believe that that theory is true?

W 10.11: Review/Catch-Up

F 10.13: Quiz #3

Week 10: Metaphysics

M 10.16: Appiah, 299-305

8.1 Introduction

8.2 An example: The existence of numbers

HW Question: Do numbers exist? Explain. Make sure to use and define the term "Platonism" in your answer.

W 10.18: Appiah, 305-316

8.3 "God" as a proper name

8.4 The necessary being: Anselm's Ontological Argument

HW Question: Explain your conception of God—describe what you are saying when you assert that God exists (or, if you're an atheist, when you assert that God does not exist).

F 10.20: Appiah, 316-317; 322-329

8.5 Hume: No a priori proofs of matters of fact

(8.6 is optional further reading, for curious students only.)

8.7 A posteriori arguments

HW Question: Explain the difference between a *a priori* and a *a posteriori* arguments.

Week 11: Arguments for God's Existence

M 10.23: Appiah 324-331

8.8 The [Thomist] argument from design

8.9 The harmony of nature

8.10 The necessity of a creative intelligence

HW Question: Explain Thomas Aquinas's argument from design that Appiah presents in 8.8.

W 10.25: Appiah, 331-338

8.11 Hume's argument from design: The argument from experience

8.12 The problem of evil and inference to the best explanation

8.13 Conclusion

HW Question: Explain the problem of evil that Appiah briefly discusses on pp. 335-336. What is the argument here supposed to be? Who is this a "problem" for?

F 10.27: Appiah, 339-353

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Traditional thought

9.3 Arguing with the Azande

9.4 The significance of literacy

HW Question: What is Cognitive Relativism? Do you believe that it is true? Explain.

Week 12: Cognitive Relativism and Free Will

M 10.30: Appiah, 353-360

9.5 Cognitive relativism

9.6 The argument against strong relativism

9.7 The argument for weak relativism

HW Question: Explain the difference between strong relativism and weak relativism.

W 11.1: Review/Catch-Up

F 11.3: Quiz #4

Week 13: The Value of Philosophy

M 11.6: Appiah, 360-365

9.8 Philosophy and religion

9.9 Philosophy and science

HW Question: Now that you have some experience of doing philosophy, what would you say is the difference between philosophy, science, and religion? Is your answer the same as Appiah's? Explain.

W 11.8: Appiah, 377-380

9.12 The special character of philosophy

9.13 Conclusion

HW Question: [No HW question]

F 11.10: Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"

HW Question: Russell claims that doing philosophy might protect us from the "tyranny of custom." What is an example of a tyrannical custom in our society? Could philosophy really help us to free our thoughts from it?

Week 14: Students' Choice

M 11.13: T.B.D.

W 11.15: T.B.D.

F 11.17: T.B.D.

Week 15: Students' Choice

M 11.20: T.B.D.

W 11.22: Thanksgiving Break

F 11.24: Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: Students' Choice

M 11.27: T.B.D.

Week 17: Finals Week

Monday, 12.4.17, 8:00am-10:30am: Quiz #5