

**Systematic Thinking:
God, Identity, and the Moderns**
University of Notre Dame
PHIL 20249 01 (30619)
Spring 2018

Instructor: Graham Clay

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Office Location: 1st Floor Alcove in Malloy Hall (across from elevator)

Office Hours: M 2-3:15, Tu 10:45-11:30, and by appointment

Class Location: O'Shaughnessy Hall Room 117

Class Hours: TuTh 9:30-10:45

Course Description:

This class is dedicated to helping you develop a systematic philosophical worldview. Ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind—you name the domain, and we'll think about a major issue from it. And, crucially, we will think about how positions on these issues relate to one another. We will see that, for instance, what you believe about personal identity affects what you ought to believe about abortion, euthanasia, and the possibility of you (yes, you!) making it into an afterlife. Every philosophical position has consequences.

Yet, as you might have noticed from the title, the so-called "modern" philosophers—roughly those writing in the period from Descartes to Kant—will also feature prominently in this class. Why? Well, like many fields, philosophy has undergone increasing specialization in recent years. One benefit of this trend is that philosophers are digging deeper into issues of all sorts. However, one cost is that often the big picture is forgotten, or at least shelved for the time being as narrower problems are addressed. An era where this sort of overspecialization did not occur was the modern period. Most moderns developed systematic worldviews that contained answers to many of the big questions. In fact, the worldviews that the moderns developed are among the main options that contemporary philosophers still investigate today. As a consequence, the moderns can provide us with guidance about how to go about developing a systematic philosophical worldview, and studying the moderns can help you better understand contemporary philosophy.

Course Goals:

By the end of this course, you should expect to have:

- Improved your ability to evaluate philosophical arguments and positions
- Begun to develop/refine your own philosophical worldview
- Improved your ability to read philosophical texts, and especially historical texts
- Improved your philosophical writing abilities
- Learned about the positions of some of the philosophers of the early modern period
- Learned some of the basic tools of logic

Grading:

30% - Participation

5% - Verbal Contributions During Lectures

Philosophy is a contact sport. This class is training for a life of doing philosophy, so you must engage with me and your classmates during lectures by asking questions and responding to others' claims. If you ask a question or make a comment at least once a week (or so), you will get a perfect score.

10% - Tuesday Quizzes

Unless noted otherwise on the syllabus (there is one exception in mid-February), there will be a short quiz at the start of every Tuesday class session. These quizzes are designed to be straightforward checks of your reading comprehension. If you do the reading for the day and understand the basics of what it expresses, you should get a perfect score every time. Your two lowest scores will be dropped.

15% - Debate Contributions

There will be a total of five Thursday debates in class. In advance of each debate, I will divide the class into three groups, one for each side of the issue under discussion and one composed of judges. You will be randomly assigned to one of the three groups for each debate, although everyone will get a chance to be a judge. Two members of each of the non-judge groups will be randomly assigned to deliver their side's opening statement or their side's opening rebuttal, although everyone will get a chance to do one or the other, and some will get a chance to do both. After a debate has finished, the judges will vote to decide who wins. The majority will elect one of its members to deliver its reasons and the dissenting minority will do the same. These debates are opportunities for you to practice defending a philosophical position, regardless of whether it is yours or not. The quality and quantity of your contributions will be the source of your grade. If you do your assigned job, participate, and make an earnest attempt to further the debate every time you speak, you will get a perfect score. More information about the debates will be provided prior to each of them.

30% - Mid-Term Essay

15% - First Part - Due February 13th at 5PM EST

The first part of your mid-term essay is due via email to me relatively early in the semester. Your essay must be 3 pages or less (double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). In it, you must articulate, argue for, and defend a version of one of the three kinds of positions on personal identity we explore in class. This defense must involve the presentation of one serious objection to your view (many such objections will be discussed in class), as well as your response to this objection. More information about this essay assignment will be provided in class.

15% - Final Draft - Due March 8th at 5PM EST

Before the mid-term break, the complete version of your mid-term essay must be turned in via email to me. It must be 6 pages or less (double spaced, 12pt Times

New Roman, 1 inch margins). In this essay, you must stick to the same position on personal identity that you defended before. You can modify your argumentation and clean up your writing, but you cannot substantially alter your previously expressed view. Then, you must explore the consequences you face in virtue of taking this view on personal identity. More specifically, you must take compatible positions in one or two of the four domains we have discussed (abortion, moral responsibility, euthanasia, and the afterlife), and you must defend yourself against one serious objection in each domain (some such objections will be discussed in class). The goal is to stake out a cluster of views that are consistent and defensible.

40% - Final Essay

5% - Rough Draft Presentation - Present either April 26th or May 1st

Your final essay concerns the topics we discuss after the mid-term break. It must be 8 pages or less (double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). In this essay, you must first articulate, argue for, and defend a position on the existence of God. As part of your defense, you must present a serious objection to this position and attempt to show why it does not undermine your view. Next, you must argue for a position on causation, miracles, evil, or free will that is consistent—and interestingly connected—with your position on the existence of God. Finally, you must defend this latter position against a serious objection.

You will be assigned one of the two dates listed above to present the rough draft of your final essay at the end of the semester. This is simply a low stakes opportunity for you to get useful feedback from your classmates on your final essay. All you need to do is tell the class—in general terms—what positions you will take, how you will argue for them, and what objections you will consider. Then your classmates will ask you questions and give you feedback in order to help you improve your essay. More information about this essay assignment will be provided in class.

35% - Final Draft - Due May 10th at 12:30PM EST

You must bring your final draft to the classroom on this day and time, and hand it to me in paper form. Emailed copies will not be accepted.

Grading Scale:

$g \geq 93$	A	$80 > g \geq 77$	C+
$93 > g \geq 90$	A-	$77 > g \geq 73$	C
$90 > g \geq 87$	B+	$73 > g \geq 70$	C-
$87 > g \geq 83$	B	$70 > g \geq 60$	D
$83 > g \geq 80$	B-	$g < 60$	F

Attendance:

Attendance is required, but everyone gets one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first results in the deduction of a third of one's overall letter grade (e.g. if you have two unexcused absences and your final grade would have been an A had you always been present, it would move to an A- because of your second unexcused absence).

Technology Policy:

You are not allowed to use any screened device during class, whether it's a phone, a laptop, or something else. The purpose of this class is to begin to develop a philosophical worldview, and doing so requires active engagement with me and your peers. Screened devices divide your attention and create unnecessary distractions.

Texts:

All texts will be provided via Sakai. They will be labeled with the dates by which they need to be read.

Honor Code:

You must comply with Notre Dame's honor code at all times. You can read more about your responsibilities under the honor code here: honorcode.nd.edu/the-honor-code/. Academic integrity is a serious matter, and I will report any violations of the honor code. Ask me if you have any questions about the honor code.

Accessibility:

Students who have a disability, or who have questions about disability, should come and talk to me. Students can also contact the Office of Disability Services for a confidential discussion in the Sara Bea Learning Center for Students with Disabilities, or by phone at 574-631-7157. All information given to Disability Services is confidential and is shared only with your consent. We recommend that students who believe they may need an accommodation for this course contact Disability Services at their earliest opportunity. This is to ensure there is time to complete the process before accommodations are actually needed. Additional information about Disability Services and the process for requesting accommodations can be found at sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu.

Class Schedule

(subject to change depending on pace, class interests, etc.)

Tuesday, January 16 - *Introductions, Course Details, Logic Crash Course*

Unit 1: Personal Identity - Abortion, Moral Responsibility, Euthanasia, and the Afterlife

Thursday, January 18 - *Personal Identity Intro, The Lockean View*

Reading #1: - Excerpts from Locke, J., (1700), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Tuesday, January 23 - *The Lockean View*

Reading #2: - Excerpts from Locke, J., (1700), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

- Excerpts from DeGrazia, D., (2005), "Human Persons," in *Human Identity and Bioethics*, Cambridge University Press.

Quiz #1

Thursday, January 25 - *The Lockean View + The Humean View*

Reading #3: - Excerpts from DeGrazia, D., (2005), "Human Persons," in *Human Identity and Bioethics*, Cambridge University Press.
- Excerpts from Hume, D., (1739), *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

Tuesday, January 30 - *The Biological View*

Reading #4: - Excerpts from DeGrazia, D., (2005), "Human Persons," in *Human Identity and Bioethics*, Cambridge University Press.
- Excerpts from Olson, E., (1999), "The Biological Approach," in *The Human Animal: Personal Identity Without Psychology*, Oxford University Press.

Quiz #2

Thursday, February 1 - *Debate*

Debate #1: **The Lockean View vs. The Biological View**

Tuesday, February 6 - *The Dualist View*

Reading #5: - Excerpts from Swinburne, R., (1984), "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory," in S. Shoemaker & R. Swinburne (eds.): *Personal Identity*, Blackwell.

Quiz #3

Thursday, February 8 - *Debate*

Debate #2: **The Winner of the Prior Debate vs. The Dualist View**

Tuesday, February 13 - *Abortion*

Reading #6: - Excerpts from Thomson, J., (1971), "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1.

First Part of Mid-Term Essay Due at 5PM EST

Thursday, February 15 - *Abortion*

Reading #7: - Excerpts from Marquis, D., (1989), "Why Abortion is Immoral," *The Journal of Philosophy* 86.

Quiz #4

Tuesday, February 20 - *Moral Responsibility*

Reading #8: - Excerpts from Glannon, W., (1998), "Moral Responsibility and Personal Identity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35.

Quiz #5

Thursday, February 22 - *Debate*

Debate #3: Abortion is Permissible vs. Abortion is Impermissible

Tuesday, February 27 - *Euthanasia*

Reading #9: - Excerpts from Foot, P., (1977), "Euthanasia," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6.

Quiz #6

Thursday, March 1 - *Euthanasia*

Reading #10: - Excerpts from Winkler, E., (1995), "Reflections on the State of Current Debate Over Physician-Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia," *Bioethics* 9.
- Excerpts from McIntyre, A., (2001), "Doing Away with Double Effect," *Ethics* 111.

Tuesday, March 6 - *The Afterlife*

Reading #11: - Excerpts from Hick, J., (1992), "The Recreation of the Psycho-Physical Person," in P. Edwards (ed.): *Immortality*, Prometheus Books.
- Excerpts from Van Inwagen, P., (1992), "The Possibility of Resurrection," in P. Edwards (ed.): *Immortality*, Prometheus Books.

Quiz #7

Thursday, March 8 - *The Afterlife*

Reading #12: - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1777), "On the Immortality of the Soul", in *Two Essays*.

Mid-Term Essay Due at 5PM EST

Tuesday, March 13 - *Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)*

Thursday, March 15 - *Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)*

Unit 2: God - Causation, Miracles, Evil, and Free Will

Tuesday, March 20 - *Leibniz's System - Arguments for Theism*

Reading #13: - Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1705), *New Essays Concerning*

Human Understanding, and excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1676), *That a Most Perfect Being Exists*.

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1697), *On the Ultimate Origination of Things*, excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1710), *Theodicy*, and excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1714), *Monadology*.
 - Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1779), *A Specimen of Dynamics*, and excerpts from Hume, D., (1779), *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

Quiz #8

Thursday, March 22 - *Leibniz's System - Creation, Causation, and Miracles*

Reading #14: - Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1686), *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

Tuesday, March 27 - *The Problem of Evil + Leibniz's Solution*

Reading #15: - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1779), *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1710), *Theodicy*.

Quiz #9

Thursday, March 29 - *A Different Solution to the Problem of Evil*

Reading #16: - Excerpts from Van Inwagen, P., (2008), *The Problem of Evil*, Oxford University Press.

Tuesday, April 3 - *Hume's System - Arguments for Agnosticism*

Reading #17: - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1739), *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

- Excerpts from Hume, D., (1748), *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.

- Excerpts from Hume, D., (1779), *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

Quiz #10

Thursday, April 5 - *Debate*

Debate #4: **Theism vs. Not**

Tuesday, April 10 - *Hume's System - Causation and Miracles*

Reading #18: - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1739), *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

- Excerpts from Hume, D., (1748), *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.

Quiz #11

Thursday, April 12 - *Compatibilism*

Reading #19: - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1748), *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1686), *Discourse on Metaphysics*.

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1710), *Theodicy*.

Tuesday, April 17 - *Incompatibilism*

Reading #20: - Excerpts from Van Inwagen, P., (1975), "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism", *Philosophical Studies* 27.
 - Excerpts from Ginet, C., (1989), "Reasons Explanation of Action: An Incompatibilist Account," *Philosophical Perspectives* 3.

Quiz #12

Thursday, April 19 - *Debate*

Debate #5: Compatibilism vs. Incompatibilism

Tuesday, April 24 - *Catch Up Day, Summary of the Semester*

Thursday, April 26 - *Student Presentations*

Essay Workshop

Tuesday, May 1 - *Student Presentations*

Essay Workshop

Thursday, May 10 - *Final Essays Due*

Final Essay Due at 12:30 PM EST