#### PHL 110 Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge, Reality, and the Self

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| Faculty Name(s)  | Joseph Van Weelden  | Contact  | joseph.vanweelden@ahduni.edu.in  |
| School  | School of Arts and Sciences  |
| Credits | 3 |
| Prerequisite  | None  |
| Course Description  | This course is an introduction to core problems in metaphysics (the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of reality) and epistemology (the branch of philosophy concerned with what we know and how we know it). Topics discussed will include rationalism vs empiricism, the relationship between the mental and the physical, personal identity, and skepticism. Authors discussed will include Descartes, Hume, Nāgārjuna, and Plato. We will close the course with an examination of how the above philosophical themes are reflected in the novel Blindsight by Peter Watts.  |
| Course Objectives  | To familiarize students with the aims and methods of philosophical inquiry. To expose students to a selection of classic philosophical problems. To introduce students to seminal theories, texts and figures in the history of philosophy. To illustrate the way in which our responses to metaphysical and epistemological questions reflect, and shape, our conceptions of ourselves.  |
| Learning Outcomes  | Upon completion of the course the student will be able to: 1. Identify and describe some fundamental philosophical problems, along with the classical philosophical answers to these problems. 2. Distinguish among various philosophical theories, and offer an informed and critical assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.. 3. Understand key figures, traditions, and trends in the history of philosophy.4. Pick out, and then reconstruct, the main argument(s) put forward within a given philosophical text.5. Identify an argument's premises and conclusion, and evaluate its validity and soundness.  |
| Pedagogy  | Lectures, class discussion, group activities.  |
| Expectation From Students  | Maintain an inclusive and respectful classroom environment, where no student is made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Complete all course readings in advance of the session (s) in which we are to discuss them. Be an active participant in the course (through contribution to class discussion etc.).  |
| Assessment/Evaluation  | * Class participation (Including attendance) [10%],
* Quizzes [20%]
* Assignments [20%]
* End Semester Examination [30%]
* Mid Semester Examination [20%]
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| Attendance Policy  | As per Ahmedabad University Policy |
| Project / Assignment Details  | 4 Quizzes, each worth 5 % of the Final Grade:  Each will consist of 10 Short Answer questions designed to test the students’ comprehension of the authors/theories we have studied.10 Reading Responses, each worth 2 % of the Final Grade: Brief (one or two page) summaries of the central argument of one of the course readings. Graded on a pass/fail basis. |
| Course Material  | Text Book: * Blindsight, Peter Watts

Coursepacks:  1 PHIL 110 ReadingsReading List:Plato. Apology, trans. Benjamin Jowett (accessible at [http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html)](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html%29)Mary Midgley. 'Philosophical Plumbing' Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 33: 139-151 (1992)Heraclitus. Fragments (accessible at [www.heraclitusfragments.com](http://www.heraclitusfragments.com))Parmenides. Fragments, trans. John Burnet  (accessible at [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments\_of\_Parmenides)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Parmenides%29) Plato. Republic, trans. Benjamin Jowett (accessible at [http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html)](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html%29) Aristotle. Metaphysics, trans. W.D Ross (accessible at <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/index.html>) A.C. Das 'Brahman and Māyā in Advaita Metaphysics' Philosophy East and West 2.2: 144-154 (1952)Kisor Chakrabarti 'The Nyāyá- Vaiśeṣika Theory of Universals' Journal of Indian Philosophy 3.3/4: 363-382 (1975)Nāgārjuna. The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way, trans. w/commentary Jay L. Garfield (1995)John Locke. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (accessible at <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/locke/john/l81u/index.html>)Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. New Essays on Human Understanding, trans. Jonathan Bennet (accessible at [https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/leibniz)](https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/leibniz%29) Rene Descartes. Meditations on First Philosophy, trans. Elizabeth S. HaldaneDavid Hume. A Treatise of Human Nature (accessible at <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hume/david/h92t/index.html>)G.E. Moore. 'Proof of An External World' Proceedings of the British Academy 25: 273-300 (1939)Immanuel Kant. Prologomena to Any Future Metaphysics trans. Gary HatfieldJen McWeeny. 'Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem', in Just the Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Arguments in Western Philosophy eds. Michael Bruce and Steven Barbone: 297-300 (2011)Louise Antony. 'The Mental and the Physical' in The Routledge Companion to Metaphysics ed. Robin Le Poidevin: 555-567 (2009)Thomas Nagel. 'What is it Like to be a Bat?' The Philosophical Review 83.4: 435-450 (1974)Patricia Churchland. 'The Hornswoggle Problem' Journal of Consciousness Studies 3.5-6: 402-408 (1996)Sankara. A Thousand Teachings, trans.Swami JagadanandaChristine M. Korsgaard. 'Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit' Philosophy & Public Affairs 18.2: 101-132 (1989)Carol Rovane. 'Why do Individuals Matter?' Daedalus 135.4: 49-59 (2006)Peter Watts. Blindsight. Creative Commons E-book. (2006) |
| Additional Information  | The Midterm exam and the Final exam will both consist of short essay questions, and will require students to a) reconstruct and b) critically analyse an argument from one of the course readings. Some questions will also require students to compare and contrast the views of different philosophers. |

#### Session Plan

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| **Topic Title**  | **Session No.**  | **Topic & Subtopic Details**  | **Readings,Cases,etc.**  | **Activities**  | **Important Dates**  |
| What is Philosophy? | 1 |  | None | Icebreaker: 'My Philosophy' questionnaire |  |
| The Value of Philosophy | 2 | Who was Socrates? Why are his life, death, and mission important?  | Plato. Apology | Are you living an examined life? |  |
| Aims and Methods of Philosophy | 3 | What do philosophers do, and how can we learn to do it ourselves?  | Midgley 'Philosophical Plumbing'  | Thinking Critically |  |
| The Structure of Philosophical Argument | 4 | What are the parts of an argument, and how can you identify them? What makes an argument good or bad?  | None | Finding and evaluating an argument |  |
| Intro to Metaphysics: The Pre-Socratics | 5 | Ancient Greek Metaphysics before Plato: Heraclitus and Parmenides  | Heraclitus. Fragments B6, B8, B12, B91, B52, B80, B88, B111, B126. Parmenides. All Fragments |  |  |
| Plato's Allegory of the Cave | 6 | What does this story tell us about reality? Are we living in Plato's cave, and if so how can we reach the surface?  | Republic Book VII 514a-520a |  |  |
| Plato's Theory of Forms | 7 | The Divided Line  | Republic Book VI 509d-511e | Quiz #1 |  |
| Aristotelian Metaphysics | 8 | Aristotle's critique of Plato, and his own metaphysics of form and matter (hylomorphism).  | Selections from Metaphysics (Book V Ch 2, Book I Ch 9, Book VII Chs 8 and 13-17) |  |  |
| Classical Indian Metaphysics | 9 | The Schools of Indian Philosophy, The Advaita Vedanta school on the fundamental nature of reality, The Nyāyá- Vaiśeṣika theory of universals  | Das 'Brahman and Māyā in Advaita Metaphysics', Chakrabarti 'The Nyāyá-Vaiśeṣika Theory of Universals' (sections 1 and 2)  |  |  |
| Buddhist Metaphysics | 10 | Nāgārjunaand the Madhyamaka School  | Nāgārjuna. The Fundamental Wisdom of The Middle Way, trans. with commentary by Jay Garfield (dedicatory verses, Chapter I, Chapter V, Chapter XIII, Chapter XV, Chapter XXI) |  |  |
| Intro to Epistemology, Rationalism vs Empiricism | 11 | How do we know anything? Locke's Empiricism, Leibniz' Rationalism  | John Locke. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (Book 1 chs 1, 2 and 4, Book 2 ch 1 ) G.W Leibniz New Essays on Human Understanding (Preface) |  |  |
| Cartesian Skepticism | 12 | Do we know anything? The Dreaming Doubt, The Evil Demon Doubt  | Rene Descartes. Meditations on First Philosophy (First Meditation) |  |  |
| Humean Skepticism | 13 | Hume's skeptical arguments re. causation, reason, and the external world. | David Hume. A Treatise of Human Nature (Book I Part I section i, Book I Part III sections ii, vi, and xiii, Book I Part 4 sections i, ii, and vii) |  |  |
| Answering the Skeptic | 14 | Two Responses to Skepticism: The Moorean Shift, Kant's Transcendental Idealism  | G.E. Moore 'Proof of an External World', Immanuel Kant Prologomena to any Future Metaphysics Preface, 4:311 to 4:316, 4:369-372 | Quiz # 2 |  |
| Midterm Review and Reflection | 15 | None |  |  |  |
| Midterm Exam | 16 |  |  |  |  |
| Cartesian Dualism | 17 | Descartes' dualism of mind and body  | Meditations On First Philosophy (Second Meditation) |  |  |
| The Mind-Body Problem | 18 | Princess Elisabeth's Challenge, Descartes' Legacy  | Jen McWeeny 'Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem'  |  |  |
| Responses to the Mind-Body Problem | 19 | A Potted History of Reactions to Descartes: Identity Theory, Behaviourism, Functionalism, Panpsychism  | Louise Antony 'The Mental and the Physical' |  |  |
| The Hard Problem of Consciousness | 20 | Nagel's knowledge argument against physicalism, and Churchland's response | Thomas Nagel 'What is it Like to be a Bat?', Patricia Smith Churchland 'The Hornswoggle Problem'  |  |  |
| Consciousness and Personal Identity | 21 | What am I? Locke's psychological criterion of personal identity, Hume's skeptical challenge  | Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book II Chapter XXVII, A Treatise of Human Nature Book I Part 1 section vi | Quiz # 3 |  |
| Skepticism About Personal Identity | 22 | Nagarjuna and the Buddhist no-self view, Sankara and the Advaita Vedanta response  | The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way Chs IX and XVIII, Sankara. Thousand Teachings Part II Ch XVI |  |  |
| Agency and Personal Identity | 23 | Personal identity: Ethical not Metaphysical? Korsgaard on persons as agents, Rovane on the bounds of agency | Korsgaard 'Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency', Rovane "Why do Individuals Matter?'  |  |  |
| Blindsight Intro | 24 |  | Watts' Blindsight p.1-54  |  |  |
| Blindsight Cont'd | 25 |  | Blindsight p.54-113 |  |  |
| Blindsight Cont'd | 26 |  | Blindsight p. 116-190  |  |  |
| Blindsight Cont'd | 27 |  | Blindsight p. 190-253  |  |  |
| Blindsight Conclusion | 28 |  | Blindsight p.253-end  | Quiz # 4 |  |
| Final Review and Reflection | 29 | None |  |  |  |
| Final Exam | 30 |  |  |  |  |