
Phil 1112

Persons: Human, Divine and Other

GSH 215, MW 8.40-9.55

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Course Description

The notion of a person is important to us. It is commonplace to talk about our personal rights and responsibilities, about having personal time or personal space. The notion is central in legal theory and politics too (e.g. in debates over abortion, or corporate rights). But what is a person? What sort of things can be persons? And what does being a person mean for how one lives one's life? We will draw mainly from philosophical sources in answering these questions - but we will draw from other sources too: literature, the law, and popular culture. Through it all, we will work on writing in a style aimed at providing sound arguments for one's views.

Learning Outcomes

Philosophy at its best is clear, cogent, and insightful. This requires the ability to engage intelligently with the philosophical views of others. So in this course you will

- +Learn to read a philosophical text slowly, carefully, and actively (get your pencils/pens/laptops out!)

Such engagement involves intense mental processing, and the best way to train yourself to think in this way is by learning to write philosophically. In writing a philosophical essay, you will

- +Locate and state what the argument of a given text is
- +Show through a clear explanation in your own words of the premises of an argument that you understand that argument
- +Scrutinize that argument and the central premises in it, providing an analysis of the coherence of that argument and of the justification of its central premises
- +Show through critical examination of various texts that you understand the central concepts at issue in this course, including but not limited to the concepts of mind, free will, responsibility, and personhood

Reading

You need to purchase two books for this course.

Eugenides, J. (2002). Middlesex. Piccador.

Vonnegut, K. (1969). Slaughterhouse-Five.

All other readings will be posted on Blackboard. See 'Schedule' below.

Writing

Writing assignments are developed to help you think and write thoughtfully and critically about the philosophical texts that we will read in class and, more generally, about the central philosophical issues at stake. Writing assignments are due at the time and date listed on the posted assignment, and must be turned in through the course website. All writing assignments that you submit will be considered public matter within the course. In other words, your work can be used in the instruction of this course itself - e.g., as an example of what writers in philosophy should strive to do. While perhaps such a practice may seem unnerving at first, we all learn best when we learn from each other. So be ready to share your work!

Standard Formatting Rules Apply. In other words, I expect 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with what is equivalent to a 8.5x11 inch sheet with 1" margins on all sides.

At different points in the semester, we will conduct peer review workshops, where students will be responsible for critically evaluating draft copies of the work of fellow students. The purpose of these workshops is (a) to receive valuable insight from your peers about your own work and (b) to critically examine the work of a fellow classmate, allowing you to both provide and gain insight about the writing process.

Grading

Grading will be determined by a combination of class participation (successful class participation requires having closely read the reading assignments for the week) and writing assignments. Below is a tentative breakdown of the weight of the factors which go into your grade, though evidence of improvement throughout the semester may be considered in the final grade assessment.

Plagiarism Quiz	0
Attendance & Participation	20
Analytic Journal Entries	10
Essay 1	0
Essay 2	10
Essay 3	15
Essay 4	20
Essay 5	25

Website

This course utilizes a Blackboard site. It will be used for announcements, readings beyond the texts you need to purchase, paper topics, journal entries, this syllabus, and a discussion forum.

Academic Dishonesty

A word about academic dishonesty: Don't. It is immoral (it's a form of theft). It also doesn't pass the risk-reward test. It's incredibly easy for us to catch. And the penalties are severe – up to and including expulsion from the university.

As a condition for passing this course, all students are required to take and receive a 12/12 on Cornell's plagiarism quiz. The quiz can be taken more than once. It can be found here: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/exercises.cfm>.

If you still aren't sure what constitutes academic dishonesty, see <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>, or ask an instructor.

Date	Notes	Reading	Topics
Week 1 1.21			<i>Introduction</i> Introduction
Week 2 1.26 1.28	Essay 1	[1] [7]	<i>The Mind-Body Problem</i> Physicalism Consciousness
Week 3 2.2 2.4		[12] [6]	<i>Freedom of the Will</i> The Free Will Debate Freedom and Personhood
Week 4 2.9 2.11	Essay 2 Final	[16]	<i>Freedom of the Will</i> Freedom and Responsibility Catch-up Day
Week 5 2.16 2.18	February Break	[17: 1-65]	<i>Freedom of the Will</i> Library Session
Week 6 2.23 2.25		[17: 66-109] [17: 110-172]	<i>Free Will</i> No Class: Sick ☹ Writing Workshop Day
Week 7 3.2 3.4	Essay 3 Draft	[17: 173-275]	<i>Free Will; Personal Identity</i> Discussion: A Clockwork Orange Novel: Slaughterhouse-Five
Week 8 3.9 3.11	Essay 3 Final	[2] [18]	<i>Non-Human Persons</i> Other Animals Corporations
Week 9 3.16 3.18		[14]	<i>Non-Human Persons</i> God Artificial Intelligence
Week 10 3.23 3.25	Essay 4 Draft Peer Review	[3: 1-78] [3: 79-165]	<i>Non-Human Persons</i> Discussion: Blade Runner
Week 11 3.30 4.1	Spring Break Spring Break		
Week 12 4.6 4.8		[19: §§1-4]; [3: 166-251] [3: 252-318]	<i>Personal Identity</i> What is Personal Identity? Writing Workshop Day
Week 13 4.13 4.15	Essay 4 Final	[13]; [3: 319-360] [3: 361-439]	<i>Personal Identity</i> Does Identity Matter? Film Discussion: Predestination
Week 14 4.20 4.22	Essay 5 (4.24)	[3: 440-531]	<i>Non-Human Persons</i> Novel: Middlesex Novel: Middlesex
Week 15 4.27 4.29	No Class Peer Review		<i>Writing Week</i>
Week 16 5.4 5.6		[11] [20]	<i>Personhood and the Meaning of Life</i> The Meaning of Life And Death

- [1] **ARMSTRONG, D.** (1980). 'The Nature of Mind.' In David Armstrong (ed.), *The Nature of Mind and Other Essays*, 1–15. Cornell University Press.
- [2] **DEGRAZIA, D.** (2005). 'On the Question of Personhood beyond Homo sapiens.' In Peter Singer (ed.), *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*, 40–53. Wiley–Blackwell.
- [3] **EUGENIDES, J.** (2002). Middlesex. Piccador.
- [4] **FISCHER, J.** 'Responsiveness and Moral Responsibility.' In *My Way*, 63–83. Oxford University Press.
- [5] **FINNIS, J. AND R. SCRUTON.** (1989). 'Corporate Persons.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Suppl.* 63: 239–74.
- [6] **FRANKFURT, H.** (1971). 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person.' *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, n. 1: 5–20.
- [7] **JACKSON, F.** (1984). 'What Mary Didn't Know.' *The Journal of Philosophy* 83, n. 5: 291–95
- [8] **KAFKA, F.** (1992). The Trial. Willa and Edwin Muir (trans). Everyman's Library.
- [9] **PARFIT, D.** (1995). 'The Unimportance of Identity.' In H. Harris (ed.), *Identity*, 13–45. Oxford University Press.
- [10] **STRAWSON, G.** (1997). 'The Self.' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 4, n. 5/6: 405–28.
- [11] **TAYLOR, R.** (2000) 'The Meaning of Life.' In *God and Evil*. Prometheus Books.
- [12] **VAN INWAGEN, P.** (2009). 'The Power of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will.' In *Metaphysics*, 253–72. Westview Press.
- [13] **VELLEMAN, J.** (2006). 'So It Goes.' *The Amherst Lecture in Philosophy* 1: 1–23.
- [14] **WAINWRIGHT, W.** (2005). 'Omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.' In Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology*, 46–65. Cambridge University Press.
- [15] **NAGEL, T.** (1974). 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' *The Philosophical Review* 83, n. 4: 435–50.
- [16] **FRANKFURT, H.** (1969). 'Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility.' *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, n. 23: 829–39.
- [17] **VONNEGUT, K.** (1969). *Slaughterhouse-Five*. New York: Dial Press Trade Paperback.
- [18] **FRENCH, P.** (1979). 'The Corporation as a Moral Person.' *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16, n. 3: 207–215.
- [19] **OLSEN, E.** (2010). 'Personal Identity.' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>. Accessed 3/29/2015.
- [20] **BRUECKNER, A, AND J. FISCHER.** (1986). 'Why is Death Bad?' *Philosophical Studies*, 50, n. 2: 213–221.