

**PHIL 202- PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY
FALL 2020**

Instructor: Gürol Irzık FASS 1049
Class hours: M 8:40-10:30; T 8:40-9:30
Office hours: W 16:30-18:00 or by appointment.
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Course description: This course is an introduction to contemporary research on the central problems of philosophy such as the nature of reality, sources and grounds of knowledge, mind-body problem, free will and determinism, and the basis of morality. Here are some of the fundamental questions we will ponder: What is the nature of reality? Is there any difference between believing something and knowing it? How do you know you are not living in a matrix? Can machines think? How can you tell? Do humans have free will? What makes an action morally right and wrong?

Lecture Format: Due to the pandemic, the course will be conducted online. Lectures will be live and recorded. I will upload them to the Google drive in the SUCourse+. Attendance is strongly encouraged.

Grading Policy: The course grade will be based one midterm exam (30 %), several take-home exams (30 %), and the final exam (40 %).

The midterm exam, as indicated below, will be given during class time from 8:40 am to 10:30 am on November 9 and recorded. You should turn on your cameras during the entire exam. If I suspect of cheating or plagiarism, I will conduct an interview, record it and decide what to do. Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses. They may result in F in the course and disciplinary action. The midterm exam will essentially contain short essay questions; it may also contain true/false and multiple choice questions. The exam aims to test your comprehension of the readings and lectures, your ability to apply them in new situations and express yourself clearly and well.

The final exam date will be announced by the university. While it will focus on material after the midterm exam, you are responsible for all material covered from the beginning of the semester. The format and mechanics of the final exam is similar to the midterm exam as described above.

There will be several (4-6) **take-home exams** in which you will be asked to answer a short question in a page or two. I will drop the lowest one of them. The aim of the take-home exams is to test your comprehension of the readings and lectures, your ability to apply them in new situations and express yourself clearly and well.

Required readings are available on the SUCourse+. They also include documents about plagiarism, how to study, and a Glossary. Please consult them. Whenever you come across a philosophical concept or position with which you are not familiar, you are advised to use the Glossary and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy freely available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/> **You should do the required readings before the class meeting.**

Course content, requirements and policies are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Recommended readings:

E. Sober, *Core Questions in Philosophy*, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1995 (On reserve)

T. Nagel, *What Does it All Mean?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 (Available online in the Information Center)

Required Readings, Course Structure and Schedule

PART I. Reasoning: Basic Concepts

The reading for Part I consists of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 from R. Giere's *Understanding Scientific Reasoning*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984, pp. 16-68.

- Oct. 5:** Introduction & R. Giere, "Chapter 2 - Statements"
- Oct. 6:** R. Giere, "Chapter 3 - Arguments and Justification"
- Oct. 12:** R. Giere, "Chapter 3 - Arguments and Justification" & "Chapter 4 - Conditional Arguments"
- Oct. 13:** R. Giere, "Chapter 4 - Conditional Arguments"

PART II. Zeno's Paradoxes and the Nature of Reality

- Oct. 19-20:** The introductory passage at the beginning; Section 1. Background; Section 2.3 The Argument from Complete Divisibility; Section 3.1 The Dichotomy; Section 3.2 Achilles and the Tortoise; Section 3.3 The Arrow, "Zeno's paradoxes" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online):
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/paradox-zeno/>

PART III. Problems of Knowledge

- Oct. 26-27:** "The Analysis of Knowledge", the introductory passage at the beginning; Sections 1, 2, 3 and 6 in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online at:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/knowledge-analysis/>
- Nov. 2-3:** "Social Epistemology", the introductory passage at the beginning, Sections 2, 3.1, and 3.2 only in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online at: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available online at:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology-social/#FirBraSocEpiTesPeeDis>
- Nov. 9:** MIDTERM EXAM

PART IV. Minds, Bodies, and Machines

- Nov. 10-16:** C. Grau, "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine", in *Introduction to Philosophy* (eds. J. Perry, M. Bratman, and J. M. Fischer), New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 195-202.
- Nov. 17:** T. Nagel, "The Mind-Body Problem", in *What Does it All Mean?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 27-37.
- Nov. 23-24:** A. M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", in *The Mind's I* (eds. D. Hofstadter and D. C. Dennett). New York. Basic Books, 1981, pp. 53-68.
- Nov. 30:** J. Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs", in *Introduction to Philosophy* (eds. J. Perry, M. Bratman, and J. M. Fischer). New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 341-353.

PART V. Free Will and Determinism

- Dec. 1:** T. Nagel, "Free Will" in *What Does it All Mean?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 47-58.
- Dec. 7:** W. Stace, "The Problem of Free Will", in *Religion and the Modern World*, Harper and Row, 1952.
- Dec. 8-14:** E. Nahmias, "Is Free Will an Illusion? Confronting Challenges from the Modern Mind Sciences". In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Moral Psychology, vol. 4: Freedom and Responsibility*. MIT Press, 2014, pp. 1-25.

PART VI. Moral Philosophy

- Dec. 15-21:** "Kant's Moral Philosophy" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/#CatHypImp>
Read only the beginning passage and Section 6.
- Dec. 22:** J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (excerpts).
- Dec. 28-29:** "The Trolley Problem", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99wc1C_yDIM
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtKjuHjXFc>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMKZ6OHVE0g>
- J. J. Thomson, "The Trolley Problem", *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 94, No. 6 (May, 1985), pp. 1395-1415
- Jan. 4:** Greene et al. "An fMRI Investigation of emotional engagement in moral judgment". *Science* 2001 Sep 14; 293(5537): 2105-8.
- Jan. 5** Review