

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY TUTORIALS

General Philosophy introduces you to some central issues in epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Metaphysics discusses fundamental questions about the nature of the world and how we fit in it. Philosophy of mind is about what it is to have a mind, i.e. what it is to have consciousness and thoughts. It will also introduce you to key arguments and writings from philosophers from the 'Early Modern' period (16 & 17th Century), especially Descartes, Locke, and Hume.

There are General Philosophy lectures in this in both Michaelmas and Hilary terms, which approach the same topics through different routes. Route A, in Michaelmas, approaches the topics through their Early Modern history. Route B, in Hilary, focuses on contemporary discussion of these topics.

The role of the tutorials is to approach each topic *through discussion*. Therefore, while you must write an essay before each tutorial (as I'll go into shortly), the primary role of these essays is to provide a springboard for discussion. Among other things, we'll analyse and assess the arguments in the reading, we'll discuss your responses to the arguments in the reading, we'll think about further objections and counterexamples and how to respond to them, and we'll discuss any technical or philosophical notions in the background.

In our tutorials we will be discussing essays that you have written in advance. The questions and readings are below. The essays should be around 1,000-1,500 words. Please email your essay to me and your tutorial partner(s) **24 hours in advance of your tutorial**. I will read and comment on your essays, and please read your tutorial partner(s)'s essays before the tutorial. If you don't send your essay by 24 hours in advance, you'll need to read your essay out at the beginning of the tutorial (this is not a punishment; it's just the tutorial group needs to know the content of your essay for the discussion). You should also feel free come to the tutorial with questions to ask which you might not have covered in your essay or that came up when reading your tutorial partner's essay.

Writing a philosophy essay can be difficult – and may be very different from essays you have written in the past. But if you find it difficult, don't get down. Your essays aren't supposed to be the last word. The point of writing, reading, and discussing philosophy essays in these tutorials is so that you can practice this again and again in a way that doesn't count towards your grade. And after going through this process, you'll find writing philosophy a lot easier. In the interim, I've written some tips for writing a philosophy essay that you can find [here](#).

You should also get into the habit of discussing the reading and your essays with each other as well as during it, especially if there's a part you find unclear, a counterargument you want to try out, etc. The main point of tutorials is to collaborate with each other to get better understanding of the issues. Collaboration needn't mean agreement; it may often involve arguing against the position your tutor or tutorial partner puts forward. Hopefully, together you'll end up having a better understanding of the issues, even if you don't end up agreeing!

Questions and Readings: Michaelmas Term

B=Background Reading E=Essential Reading F=Further Reading

Week 1. Scepticism

Question: What, if anything, is wrong with Moore's response to the sceptic?

- B. Jonathan Dancy. 1985. *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Blackwell): ch. 1.
- E. René Descartes. 1641. *Meditations on First Philosophy, with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, edited by John Cottingham (CUP): 1st Meditation.
- E. G.E. Moore. 1939. "Proof of an External World." In [*Philosophical Papers*](#) (George Allen & Unwin, 1959): 127–150.
- F. William G. Lycan. 2001. "[Moore against the New Sceptics](#)." *Philosophical Studies* 103 (1): 35–53.

Week 2. Mind and Body 1

Question: "It's possible to doubt whether my body exists, whereas it's not possible to doubt whether my mind exists." Is this true? What should we conclude from it?

- B. Howard Robinson. "[Dualism](#)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: secs. 1.2 & 4.3.
- E. René Descartes. 1641. *Meditations on First Philosophy, with Selections from the Objections and Replies*, edited by John Cottingham (CUP): 2nd & 6th Meditations.
- E. Antoine Arnauld and René Descartes. 4th Objections and Replies to 6th Meditation.
It can be tricky to find the relevant bit of this reading. There are various editions, but you can find it in the following two ones:
 - a. *In the Cottingham edition referred to above:* The first section of the Objections to Meditation Six entitled 'The real distinction between mind and body'. Arnauld's objections are 107–110; Descartes' reply is 110–112.
 - b. *Jonathan Bennett's [simplified translation](#) on 'Early Modern Texts':* Arnauld's objections are entitled 'Objections concerning the human mind' (54–59); Descartes' responses are 'Replies concerning the nature of the human mind' (59–64).
- F. Brie Gertler. 2007. "In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism." In Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau (eds.) [*Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*](#) (Thomson Wadsworth): 13th edition or later.
- F. Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes. 1643–49. [*The Correspondence between Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia and Rene Descartes*](#), edited and translated by Lisa Shapiro (Chicago, 2007): first five letters, 61–73.

Week 3. Personal Identity

Question: What, if anything, makes you the same person as you were last week?

- B. Eric Olson. "[Personal Identity](#)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- E. John Locke. 1690. "Of Identity and Diversity." In [*An Essay concerning Human Understanding*](#), edited by Peter H. Nidditch (Clarendon, 1975): bk. II, ch. 27. Reprinted in John Perry (ed.) *Personal Identity* (UCLA, 1975): 33–52.
- E. Joseph Butler. 1736. "Of Personal Identity." In [*The Analogy of Religion*](#), 2nd edition:

- appendix I. Reprinted in Perry (ed.) *Personal Identity*: 99–106.
- E. Thomas Reid. 1785. “Of the Nature and Origin of Our Notion of Personal Identity.” In *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, essay III, ch. 3. Partly excerpted as “Of Mr. Locke’s Account of Personal Identity.” In Perry (ed.) *Personal Identity*: 113–119.
- F. Sydney Shoemaker. 1984. “Personal Identity: A Materialist’s Account.” In Shoemaker and Swinburne *Personal Identity* (Blackwell): secs. 1–5: 69–91.
- F. Bernard Williams. 1970. “[The Self and the Future](#).” *Philosophical Review* 79 (2): 161–180.

Week 4. Free Will

Question: Are we able to do anything other than what we in fact do? Do we need this ability in order to be free?

- E. David Hume. 1748. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Peter Millican (OUP, 2007): sec. VIII, “Of Liberty and Necessity.”
- E. A. J. Ayer. 1946. “Freedom and Necessity.” In *Philosophical Essays* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1954): 271–284. Reprinted in Gary Watson (ed.) *Free Will*, 1st Edition (OUP, 1982).
- E. Peter Van Inwagen. 1975. “[The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism](#).” *Philosophical Studies* 27 (3): 185–199.
- F. Harry Frankfurt. 1969. “[Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility](#).” *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (23): 829–839.
- F. David K. Lewis. 1981. “[Are we free to break the laws?](#)” *Theoria* 47(3): 113–121.

Questions and Readings: Hilary Term

Week 1. Knowledge & The Gettier Problem

Question: What are Gettier cases? What should they lead us to conclude about knowledge?

- B. Stephen Hetherington. 2011. “The Gettier Problem.” In Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (Routledge): 119–130.
- E. Edmund Gettier. 1963. “[Is justified true belief knowledge?](#)” *Analysis* 23 (6): 121–23.
- E. Michael Clark. 1963. “[Knowledge and Grounds: A Comment on Mr. Gettier's Paper](#).” *Analysis* 24 (2): 46–48.
- E. Alvin I. Goldman. 1967. “[A Causal Theory of Knowing](#).” *Journal of Philosophy* 64 (12): 357–372.
- F. Linda Zagzebski. 1994. “[The Inescapability of Gettier Problems](#).” *Philosophical Quarterly* 44(174): 65–73.

Week 2. Mind and Body 2

Question: What, if anything, does Mary learn when she leaves her black and white room? What does the answer tell us about the relationship between the mind and the brain?

- B. Martine Nida-Rümelin “[Qualia: The Knowledge Argument](#).” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: secs. 1–3, 4.1–4.5
- E. Frank Jackson. 1982. “[Epiphenomenal Qualia](#).” *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (127): 127–136.

- F. David K. Lewis. 1988. "[What Experience Teaches.](#)" In *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (CUP, 1999): 262–290.
- F. Earl Conee. 1994. "[Phenomenal Knowledge.](#)" *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 72 (2): 136–150.

Week 3. Induction

Question: What is the problem of induction? Can it be solved?

- E. David Hume. 1748. [An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding](#) (OUP): sec. VI, "Sceptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding."
- E. Bertrand Russell. 1912. [The Problems of Philosophy](#) (OUP): ch. 6.
- F. P. F. Strawson. 1952. [Introduction to Logical Theory](#) (Routledge): ch. 9, pt. II: 248–263.
- F. David Papineau. 1992. "[Reliabilism, Scepticism and Induction.](#)" *Philosophical Quarterly* 42 (166): 1–20.

Week 4. God

Question: "There is evil in the world, so there isn't a God." Discuss.

- E. David Hume. 1779. [Dialogues concerning Natural Religion](#), edited by A. Wayne Colver and John Vladimir Price (OUP, 1976): pts. 10–11.
- E. Linda Zagzebski. 2007. *The Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Blackwell): ch. 7: 143–167.

The following two papers pose two different forms of the problem of evil: the logical problem of evil (Mackie) and the evidential problem of evil (Rowe). It would be best to concentrate on only one version of the problem of evil in your essay,, for the sake of greater depth.

- F. John Mackie. 1955. "[Evil and Omnipotence.](#)" *Mind* 64 (254): 200–212.
- F. William L. Rowe. 1979. "[The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism.](#)" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (4): 335–341.