

## SYLLABUS: PHL 323K ISSUES IN METAPHYSICS

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### **DESCRIPTION**

We will examine some main issues in metaphysics: personal identity, free will, God, and color.

### **FLAG**

This course carries the Writing Flag (Wr). Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

The objective is to understand the main issues, the main arguments, and to hone general thinking and writing skills.

*(1) Class participation 5%*

In order to get full credit here, you must come to class, *and* you must ask several questions, or make several comments, in class during the course of the semester. (Incidentally, to help foster class discussion, I will often divide you into small groups.)

*(2) Questions or comments about readings 5%*

There will be 24 reading assignments (A1-A24 below). I require that, after you finish each reading, you email me *two short questions or comments* on that reading. Generally, I expect you to email me these around the time I assign the reading, but I will also accept late comments. (So if I say "for our next meeting read assignments X and Y", then I prefer that you to send me two questions or comments on each of X and Y prior to that meeting.) This will help me and you. You will be graded on this *pass-fail*: if (and only if) *by the last class period (Thursday, December 4)* you turn in two questions or comments on each reading (A1-A24), you pass (5 points), otherwise you fail (0 points). **Send these to my gmail (non-Utexas account): [adam.pautz@gmail.com](mailto:adam.pautz@gmail.com).** *It is your responsibility to keep track of your assignment comments. You can put assignment numbers in your title, and you can keep your emails to me in your outbox.*

*(3) Midterm Short Essay 20%*

10-15 page essay on **personal identity**. Due by **Friday, October 24**. Email it to me in pdf format. I will write comments to help you improve your writing. I ask that you keep these comments in mind in writing your final paper. I will send you a detailed assignment.

(4) *Rough Draft of Final Paper: 10%.*

Due Date: **Tuesday, November 25** (about week prior to our last class day).

15-20 pages. Topic: one of the theories discussed in class *after* personal identity (a detailed assignment will be supplied in class). The rough draft will be graded credit/no credit (10% or 0%). On the due date, I will have you bring a hard-copy of your rough draft to class, exchange it with a paper partner. Each will write comments on the other's paper. To get credit for your rough draft, you must turn in your rough draft, with your paper partner's comments on it, with your final draft. Also, your rough draft must be 15-20 pages, and must be at least readable.

(5) *Final Draft of Second Paper: 60%.*

Due Date: **Thursday, December 11** (a week after our last class day; two weeks after rough draft due).

This paper must be a significantly *revised* version of your rough draft. (I will not accept it, if it is identical with your rough draft.)

(6) Late policy. I will not accept lateness (zero-credit) unless you have a documented excuse, such as illness, death in the family, etc.

(7) Grading

I do not use '+' or '-'.

(8) Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

## SCHEDULE

### 1 Persons and Personal Identity

**A1** Overview: Sider, "Personal Identity", in *Riddles*

**A2** *Bodily Theory*: Swinburne, "Personal Identity: Dualist Theory", pp. 317-20

**A3** *Psychological Theory*: Swinburne, pp. 320-27.

**A4** Shoemaker, "Personal Identity: A Materialist Account", sections 3-5.

**A5** *Soul Theory*: Swinburne, Section 2

**A6** *The Value of Survival*: Nagel, "Death"

### 2 Free Will

**A7** Overview: "Free Will and Determinism", in *Riddles*

**A8** *Classical Compatibilism*: Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determination . . ."

**A9** *Neo-Compatibilism*: Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

**A10** Problem for Compatibilism: Lewis "Are we free to break the laws?"

**A11** Is Compatibilism Counter-intuitive? Nichols, "Experimental Philosophy and Free Will".

**A12** Is Compatibilism in Conflict with Neuroscience?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ4nwTTmcgs>

**A13** Libertarianism: Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”

**A14** Mysterianism: van Inwagen, “The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom” <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/~uctytho/dfwvanInwagen1.htm>

### 3 God, Why Fine-Tuned, Why Anything?

**A15** “God”, in *Riddles*;

**A16** Byrne, <http://bostonreview.net/alex-byrne-philosophy-god>,

**A17** van Inwagen, two chapters from *Metaphysics*

**A18** Parfit, The Puzzle of Reality.

**A19** Maudlin, <http://aeon.co/magazine/nature-and-cosmos/why-does-the-universe-appear-fine-tuned-for-life/>

### 4 Color

**A20** Overview, Byrne “Is Snow White?”,

<https://www.bostonreview.net/alex-byrne-is-snow-white-other-questions-about-appearance-and-reality>

**A21** Physicalism: Byrne and Hilbert, selections from “Color Realism and Color Science”

**A22** Dispositionalism: McGinn, selection from *The Subjective View*

**A23** Primitivism: McGinn, “Another Look at Color”

**A24** Eliminativism: Mackie, “Primary and Secondary Qualities”