

## PHIL 330-02: Philosophy of the Human Person

Lecture Hours: MWF 11 – 11:50, Ritter Hall 200

Office Hours: By Appointment, in Adorjan Hall, First Floor Lounge

Instructor: Mr. Jeremy Skrzypek

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### Course Description:

This course will serve as an overview of some philosophical issues related to human persons. Traditionally, this sort of investigation would have been called “Philosophical Anthropology” or “Philosophy of Human Nature”. Today we might say that this course is about “Personal Identity” or the “Ontology of Persons”. Whatever we choose to call it, the important thing to note is that this course is about *us*. Our goal will be to use the tools of philosophical reasoning to come to a better understanding of *our* fundamental nature, to come to a better understanding of what *we* are. Throughout the course we will consider questions as strange and interesting as:

*If I woke up after some terrible accident having absolutely no memory of anything that came before, would I still be me?*

*If scientists could somehow transplant my brain to another body, would I go with it?*

*Would hopping into a science fiction-type teletransporter take me to another planet or would it send an exact duplicate at my expense?*

*Was I ever housed within my mother's womb or did I begin to exist some time after birth?*

*If all there is to me is my body, is there any way for me to survive my death?*

The course will be split into three sections. The first section of the course will be a brief introduction to the subject matter and methodology of metaphysics more generally, and the ontology of persons in particular. In the second, and by far the longest, section of the course we will explore three main theories of personal identity: *Psychological Continuity Theory*, according to which we are essentially constituted by psychological states such as memories, beliefs, desires, or intentions, *Biological Continuity Theory* (or “Animalism”), according to which we are fundamentally organisms, surviving as long as our metabolic activities continue to function, and two versions of *Soul Theory* (*Substance Dualism* and *Hylomorphism*), according to which something more than mere psychological or biological continuity explains our persistence over time. In the third section of the course we will consider the implications of these theories of personal identity for various issues in applied ethics and philosophy of religion, including beginning of life issues, end of life issues, and the possibility of immortality.

### Course Objectives:

Over the course of the semester we will attempt to achieve four main objectives:

*(1) Students will be introduced to, and have at least a basic understanding of, three major theories of personal identity.*

*(2) Students will be able to understand and evaluate arguments in philosophical texts pertaining to those theories of personal identity.*

*(3) Students will learn how to think clearly and creatively when addressing issues in personal identity and begin to form and defend their own arguments for or against certain views.*

(4) Students will have a better understanding of how issues in personal identity are related to certain issues in applied ethics and the philosophy of religion.

#### Required Texts:

1. John Perry (editor), *Personal Identity*, Second Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)
2. Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity Without Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
3. Thomas S. Hibbs (editor), Thomas Aquinas, *On Human Nature* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999)
4. Various articles posted on course website (as indicated below with \*)

Note on texts: Students are expected to bring their own copies of the assigned readings to each class. This includes the articles posted on the course website. It is the responsibility of each student to print out these documents ahead of time and bring physical, hard copies to the appropriate classes, as the use of laptops, smartphones, or other electronic devices will not be permitted during class time. If any student has any problems obtaining any of the texts or printing any of the assigned readings, he or she is urged to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

#### Breakdown of Final Grade:

5% = Attendance.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class (unless a “Throwdown” takes its place, should there be one for that day – see “Three-Minute Throwdowns” below). Each student begins the semester with a perfect score in the attendance category and is allowed to miss up to three classes without any penalty. After three absences, a point will be deducted per day missed. Notice also that continued absences hurt not only one’s grade in the attendance category, but could also do some damage in the “Throwdown” category as well, should he or she miss the days in which those are held. If any student is forced to miss class due to some emergency, he or she is strongly encouraged to contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of those absences being excused.

10% = Three-Minute Throwdowns.

Periodically throughout the course, certain classes will begin with what I will call a “Three-Minute Throwdown”. At the start of class, students will be asked to write down on a sheet of paper their answers to five quick questions I will ask related to the readings assigned for that date. This should only take about three minutes, and at the end of that three minutes I will collect each student’s answers. A student’s grade in this category will be calculated based on how many correct answers he or she achieved out of the number of questions asked. The questions from each student’s three lowest scoring throwdowns will be dropped. Students will not be told ahead of time which classes will feature these “Throwdowns”, so attending class

regularly, arriving on time, and consistently having the assigned readings read for the dates they are due will be essential to one's success in this aspect of the course.

*20% = Philosophy in Film Reflection Paper*

For this assignment, each student is required to view at least one film (classic or recent) that deals with issues in personal identity or human nature and write a reflection paper on that film explaining in three to four double-spaced pages how it relates to some of the material we have covered in class. A list of relevant films will be provided by the instructor; others may be used with the instructor's approval. More details will be given on the day the essay is assigned (see dates below).

*20% = Midterm exam*

The midterm exam will cover all of the readings and topics discussed in class up to that point. It will include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and an essay question. All students must take the exam on the day it is held unless prior permission is given by the instructor.

*25% = Final Essay*

For the final essay, each student is required to give an analysis and evaluation, in six to eight double-spaced pages, of one of the main theories of personal identity covered in class. The essay should include an outline of the main features of the theory, the main arguments in favor of that theory, some of the main objections to it, and at least one practical implication of the view. There will be a minimal research component to the assignment. As with the reflection paper, more details will be given on the day the essay is assigned.

*20% = Final Exam*

The final exam will cover all of the readings and topics discussed in class after the midterm. It will also include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and an essay question. All students must take the exam on the day it is held unless prior permission is given by me.

**Grading Scale:**

Although essays, exams, and "Throwdowns" will be weighted differently (based on the figures above), each particular assignment will be graded on a one-hundred point scale as follows:

A = 100 – 93	C+ = 79 – 77
A- = 92 – 90	C = 76 – 73
B+ = 89 – 87	C- = 72 – 70
B = 86 – 83	D = 69 – 60
B- = 82 – 80	F = <60

Note on late assignments: Unless specified otherwise, all essays and assignments are due in hard copy by the end of class on the dates listed below, barring any adjustments in the schedule by me. Any papers not received by the end of class on the date they are due will receive a TEN POINT deduction (based on the assignment's 100-point scale) PER DAY. No assignments will be accepted more than five days after they are due.

#### **Additional Notes and Policies:**

Cheating/ Plagiarism. Academic honesty and integrity are vital for your success as a student and my effectiveness as an instructor. As a result, copying, cheating, plagiarizing, or otherwise presenting work as your own that was in fact received from another source will not be tolerated. Any confirmed instance of cheating or plagiarizing will be met with at the very least a failing grade on that assignment. As per university policy, penalties could be as grave as a failing grade in the entire course, academic probation or even dismissal from the university. Please take this issue very seriously.

Special Needs. Any student who has a learning or physical disability documented by the university's office of Student Disability Services is encouraged to let me know as soon as possible. I will be happy to make the appropriate accommodations for those who require them.

#### **[Tentative] Schedule for Readings and Assignments:**

*NOTE: Readings and assignments are to be completed FOR the class meetings listed below.*

*FURTHER NOTE: Readings that are available on the course website are indicated below with an asterisk.*

Mon., 8/25: **Class Introductions and Syllabus Overview, Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Metaphysics**

Wed., 8/27: **Introduction to Personal Identity** [David Shoemaker, *Personal Identity and Ethics*, pp. 1-19]\*

Fri., 8/29: *Same topic continued* [Eric Olson, *What Are We?*, pp. 3-22]\*

Mon., 9/1: **NO CLASS** (Labor Day)

Wed., 9/3: **Psychological Continuity: Memory Accounts** [John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity", in John Perry, *Personal Identity*, pp. 33-52]

Fri., 9/5: *Same topic continued* [Joseph Butler, "Of Personal Identity", pp. 99-105; Thomas Reid, "Of Identity", pp. 107-112; Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity", pp. 113-118]

Mon., 9/8: *Same topic continued* [Sydney Shoemaker, "Persons and Their Pasts", pp. 249-282]

Wed., 9/10: *Same topic continued*

Fri., 9/12: **Psychological Continuity: Bundle Theory** [David Hume, "Our Idea of Identity", pp. 159-160; Hume, "Of Personal Identity", pp. 161-172; Hume "Second Thoughts", pp. 173-176]

Mon., 9/15: **Psychological Continuity: Thought Experiments** [Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future", pp. 179-198]

Wed., 9/17: *Same topic continued* [Derek Parfit, "Why Our Identity is Not What Matters", pp. 115-143]\*

Fri., 9/19: *Same topic continued*; Reflection Paper Assigned

Mon., 9/22: **Animalism: Against Psychological Continuity** [Eric Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 7-21]

Wed., 9/24: *Same topic continued* [Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 42-52]

Fri., 9/26: **NO CLASS** (Instructor Away)

Mon., 9/29: *Same topic continued* [Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 73-89]

Wed., 10/1: *Same topic continued* [Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 94-111; Olson, "An Argument for Animalism", pp. 318-333\*]

Fri., 10/3: **NO CLASS** (Presidential Inauguration)

Mon., 10/6: **Animalism: Biological Continuity** [Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 124-153]

Wed., 10/8: *Same topic continued*; REFLECTION PAPER DUE

Fri., 10/10: **NO CLASS** (Instructor Away)

Mon., 10/13: **Animalism: Dead Bodies and Thinking Brains** [W. R. Carter, "Will I Be a Dead Person?", pp. 167-171; David Hershenov, "Persons as Proper Parts of Organisms", pp. 29-37]\*

Wed., 10/15: **First-Half Summary, Review for Midterm**

Fri., 10/17: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Mon., 10/20: **NO CLASS** (Fall Break)

Wed., 10/22: **Substance Dualism** [Plato, *Phaedo*, pp. 101-107, 116-122, 137-145; Rene Descartes, *Meditations*, pp. 23-27, 61-68]\*

Fri., 10/24: *Same topic continued* [Richard Swinburne, "Body and Soul", pp. 31-36; Jaegwon Kim, "Lonely Souls", pp. 30-43]\*

Mon., 10/27: **Hylomorphism: Form and Matter** [Thomas Aquinas, *On Human Nature*, pp. 16-33, 60-62, 66-68]

Wed., 10/29: *Same topic continued* [Thomas Aquinas, *On Human Nature*, pp. 75-80, 85-94, 98-101; Aquinas, "Selections"\*]

Fri., 10/31: **Hylomorphism: Immateriality of the Soul** [Thomas Aquinas, *On Human Nature*, pp. 63-66, 70-73, 188-191]

Mon., 11/3: **Hylomorphism: Contemporary Accounts** [Patrick Toner, "Hylemorphic Animalism", pp. 65-81]\*

Wed., 11/5: *Same topic continued* [David Oderberg, "Hylemorphic Dualism", pp. 70-99]\*

Fri., 11/7: *Same topic continued*; Final Essay Assigned

Mon., 11/10: **Beginning of Life** [Lynne Rudder Baker, "When Does a Person Begin?", pp. 25-48]\*

Wed., 11/12: *Same topic continued* [Olson, *The Human Animal*, pp. 89-93; Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, "The First Fourteen Days of Human Life", pp. 61-67]

Fri., 11/14: *Same topic continued* [Alexander Pruss, "I Was Once a Fetus", pp. 169-182]\*

Mon., 11/17: **End of Life** [Jeff McMahan, "An Alternative to Brain Death", pp. 44-48; Jason Eberl, "Dualist and Animalist Perspectives on Death", pp. 477-490]\*

Wed., 11/19: *Same topic continued* [Patrick Lee, "Personhood, Dignity, Suicide, and Euthanasia", pp. 329-343]\*

Fri., 11/21: *Same topic continued*

Mon., 11/24: **Surviving Death** [Dean Zimmerman, "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The 'Falling Elevator' Model", pp. 194-212; David Hershenov, "The Metaphysical Problem of Intermittent Existence and the Possibility of Resurrection", pp. 24-36]\*

Wed., 11/26: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving Break)

Fri., 11/28: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving Break)

Mon., 12/1: *Same topic continued*; FINAL ESSAY DUE

Wed., 12/3: *Same topic continued* [Christina van Dyke, "Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-Repeatability", pp. 373-394; Jason Eberl, "Do Human Persons Persist Between Death and Resurrection?", pp. 188-205]\*

Fri., 12/5: *Same topic continued*

Mon., 12/8: **Second-Half Summary, Review for Final**

TBA: **FINAL EXAM**