

# General Philosophy Tutorial Programme

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The reading lists below are short. They are intended to guide you to the information you need to write a good tutorial essay. But if you intend to revise a topic for the exam you will need to read more widely. The faculty reading lists should be your guide to further reading during the vacations.

Some of my reading lists include podcast suggestions, and even a couple of bits of relevant fictional writing. These are all optional, but they might be a welcome way of varying your working activities.

An excellent – though non-exhaustive – introduction to the paper is the following short book:

Jennifer Nagel (2014). *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, chapters 1-5. Oxford: OUP.

## Submission Guidelines

- Submit via email: [nick.tasker@philosophy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:nick.tasker@philosophy.ox.ac.uk)
- Word length: no more than 1500 words, including titles and footnotes, but not including the bibliography. Note: your essays *must not be a single word* over 1500 words long. (You should aim to write 1800+ words and then boil the essay down to 1500 through strategic editing and polishing.)
- Use a filename which includes your name and a keyword to identify the essay topic. E.g.: Jones\_Induction.
- Include page numbers.
- At the top of your essay, copy out the question you are answering.
- Send a copy to your tutorial partner.
- Don't worry too much about referencing, but the preferred system is the Harvard system.

# Free Will

## Essay Question

In order to have  $\varphi$ -ed [performed some action] freely, is it necessary that—without changing the circumstances of the action in any way—it was possible for me to have not  $\varphi$ ed?

## Readings

A very short and accessible introduction to the topic:

- Helen Steward, (2002). “Are they playing our tune?” *Think* 1(2), 51-56. 1.

A short introductory book aimed at undergraduates:

- Joseph Keim Campbell, (2011). *Free Will* (Polity).

A robust defence of incompatibilism:

- Peter Van Inwagen, ‘The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism’ *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975) 185–99; also in Watson (ed) *Free Will*, 1st edition (OUP, 1982).

A classic presentation of compatibilism:

- J. Ayer, ‘Freedom and Necessity’, in Ayer, *Philosophical Essays* (Macmillan, 1954), Chapter 12; also in Gary Watson (ed) *Free Will* (1st edition) (OUP 1982), Chapter 1, 15–23.

A famous rejection of the idea that being able to do otherwise (in any sense) is necessary for moral responsibility:

- H. Frankfurt, ‘Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility’, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66, No. 23. (Dec. 4, 1969), 829–839. Also in Gary Watson (ed.) *Free Will* (2nd edition) (OUP 2002), Chapter 8, pp.167–176.

## Podcasts

- *In Our Time* has an episode on free will: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00z5y9z>
- *Hi Phi Nation*, the excellent and entertaining philosophy podcast, has this episode – “Wilful Acts” – on free will and addiction: <https://hiphination.org/complete-season-two-episodes/s2-episode-8-willful-acts/>

# God and Evil

## Essay Question

Should the existence of extreme human suffering lead a religious believer to abandon their faith?

## Readings

A book length introduction to the topic (chapters 1, 2, and 3 are the ones to focus on). It is available electronically on SOLO:

- D. Speak (2015) *The Problem of Evil*, Polity.

A classic article advancing the problem of evil as an argument against theism:

- J.L. Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence', *Mind* 64 (1955) 200–212; also in M. M. Adams and R. M Adams (eds) *The Problem of Evil* (OUP, 1990), Chap. 1.

Further articles from the faculty reading list:

- Linda Zagzebski, *Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Wiley: 2007), §7.1 and 7.2.
- Peter van Inwagen, 'The Argument from Evil', in Peter van Inwagen (ed.), *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 2004), pp. 55-73.

## Other

- Have some free time? Read *The Plague*, Albert Camus' philosophical novel about a fictional epidemic in Oran. See if you can make out what Camus wants to say about the problem of evil through his character, Father Paneloux. (This is just for fun. It's not required, and probably not very useful for your essay.)

# Knowledge

## Essay Question

‘A clairvoyant lacks knowledge, even if clairvoyance is reliable. A five-year old child, however, can know that the door is shut or that the television is on.’ Discuss.

## Readings

- Edmund Gettier (1963). Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? *Analysis* 23(6), 121-123.
- Jennifer Nagel (2014). *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, chapters 1, 4, and 5. Oxford: OUP.
- Alvin Goldman (1967). A Causal Theory of Knowing. *The Journal of Philosophy* 64(12), 357- 372.
- Lawrence BonJour (1980). Externalist Theories of Empirical Knowledge. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5(1), 53-74.

# Perception

## Essay Question

What, if anything, do illusion and hallucination tell us about the nature of perception?

## Readings

This first selection is an extremely accessible, book-length introduction to the major philosophical themes relating to perception. For General Philosophy, chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6 are really useful, but for now, just read chapters 1 and 2. It is available as an ebook from the Bodleian.

- William Fish (2010) *Philosophy of Perception: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge).

Another good introduction to the topic is this SEP article:

- Tim Crane and Craig French 'The Problem of Perception' in E. Zalta, ed. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

For more challenging reading, and for the definitive contemporary defence of sense data, try the following:

- Howard Robinson (1994) *Perception* (Routledge), Ch. II and VI.

## Podcasts

- *HiPhi Nation*, “The Illusionist”:  
<https://hiphination.org/season-3-episodes/s3-episode-9-the-illusionist-jun-8-2019/>
- There’s also an *In Our Time* episode on “Perception and the Senses”:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9h0>

# External World Scepticism

## Essay Question

Consider the following argument:

P1) If I know I'm reading, then I know I'm not a brain in a vat.

P2) I don't know I'm not a brain in a vat.

C) Therefore, I don't know I'm reading.

Do you know whether you are currently reading?

## Readings

- Jennifer Nagel (2014). *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, chapters 2 and 5. Oxford: OUP.
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (trans. John Cottingham), Meditation I.
- G. E. Moore, "Proof of an External World", in Michael Huemer (ed.) *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings* (Routledge 2002), Chapter 9, pp. 602-605. First published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25 (1939): 273-300. Reprinted in Moore, *Philosophical Papers*, (Allen & Unwin, 1959), Chapter 7, pp. 127-150.
- Robert Nozick, "Knowledge and Skepticism", in Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford UP, 1981), pp. 167–185. Reprinted in: Sven Bernecker and Fred Dretske (eds.) *Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford UP 2000), pp. 347–54; in Jonathan Dancy (ed.), *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford UP, 1988); in Keith DeRose and Ted Warfield (eds.), *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader* (Oxford UP, 1999), pp. 156–164; and in Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim (eds.), *Epistemology: An Anthology*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Blackwell, 2000), or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Ernest Sosa, Jaegwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath (Blackwell, 2008).
- Susanna Rinard (2018), "Reasoning One's Way Out of Scepticism." In Kevin McCain and Ted Poston (eds.), *The Mystery of Skepticism*, Brill.

## Podcasts

- *In Our Time* has an episode on scepticism: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01kblc3>
- And another on Descartes' cogito: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b010mvcp>
- You may also be interested in this, on Islamic philosopher, Al Ghazali: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b055j9rv>

# Mind and Body

## Essay Question

Is substance dualism compatible with the fact that we can sometimes intentionally move our arms?

## Readings

Start with this introduction to the philosophy of mind, and focus on chapters 1 and 2. Available online through SOLO:

- Kim, Jaegwon (2010). *Philosophy of Mind*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Westview Press.

Descartes's classic text is unmissable, and see Elizabeth of Bohemia for a statement of the causal interaction objection:

- Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations II and VI.
- Elizabeth of Bohemia, "Correspondence with Descartes", in Margaret Atherton (ed.), *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, pp.19-21, Hackett.

The next item is from a leading contemporary philosopher who defends a form of naturalistic dualism:

- David Chalmers (1996). *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, ch.1, ch.3 §1 up to p.99, ch.4 §1. Oxford: OUP.

## Podcasts

- *In Our Time* has an episode on the mind/body problem:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p003k9b8>

# Personal Identity

## Essay Question

What conditions must be met for person A in 1984 to be the same person as person B in 2000?

## Readings

The first item is an accessible and highly readable, book-length introduction to the topic. Just focus on chapters 1-4 (ebook available on SOLO):

- Amy Kind (2015), *Persons and Personal Identity*, Polity.

A useful overview, written from the perspective of a philosopher who defends an animalist approach to personhood:

- Eric Olson, “Personal Identity”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal/>>

A famous contribution to the debate:

- Derek Parfit (1984). “Why Our Identity is Not What Matters”. In Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford: OUP. Reprinted in Raymond Martin and John Barresi (eds.), *Personal Identity* (Blackwell, 2003).

## Other

- *HiPhi Nation*, “The Self and Survival”: <https://hiphination.org/complete-season-two-episodes/s2-e6-the-self-and-survival/>
- I would highly recommend the short story, “Where am I?”, by Daniel Dennett (a well-known philosopher), printed in his *Brainstorms*.