

UC Irvine, Fall 2020

Professor Duncan Pritchard

dhpritch@uci.edu

https://www.faculty.uci.edu/profile.cfm?faculty_id=6341

PHIL 1

Introduction to Philosophy

<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/27828>

Syllabus Version: September 9th, 2020. (NB. I will be updating the syllabus as required, so please make sure you have the latest version).

Course Overview: This course provides a general introduction to the main topics in philosophy, with a particular emphasis on what constitutes a ‘good’ life of human flourishing. The topics covered include: Ethics, Political Philosophy, Aesthetics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Religion, and concluding with The Meaning of Life.

Please note that this is a **100% online course**, and so **you are not physically required to attend any classes**. Moreover, although the discussion groups have a timetabled hour attached to them (this is done automatically I’m afraid, so we can’t get rid of them), this course is completely flexible, and hence you are not required to attend your discussion group at a particular time (see below for more details about discussion groups works). Instead, you will engaged in the virtual learning environment that we have created here, with lots of educational resources uploaded to enable you to complete this course (such as recorded mini-lecture videos and so on).

Teaching Assistants:

- Natalia Nealon, nnealon@uci.edu
- Michelle Pitassi, michelst@uci.edu
- Tanuj Raut, rautt@uci.edu

- Bin Zhao, binz8@uci.edu
- Tiffany Zhu, tazhu@uci.edu

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Requirement for Philosophy Major/Minor: Philos 1 satisfies a requirement for the B.A. degree in philosophy, the minor in philosophy, and the minor in humanities and law.

General Education Category IV: Philos 1 satisfies the General Education Category IV (Arts and Humanities). General Education Category IV courses expand the student's sense of diverse forms of cultural expression, past and present. Students develop their critical capacity as they discover how meaning is created and experience is variously interpreted.

Learning Outcomes: After completing Philos 1, successful students should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of some of the main views, concepts, and theories in philosophy in their historical and cultural context.
- Demonstrate a critical recognition of the philosophical approaches to the formation of culture.
- Demonstrate imaginative, creative, and reflective abilities by articulating philosophical insights.
- Present effectively in writing an extended argument on a topic of philosophical importance. Articulate counter-arguments to one's own position. Ask questions to clarify problems further.
- Demonstrate awareness of the complexity of issues and of the necessity of examining issues from many different perspectives. Demonstrate openness and intellectual humility by approaching philosophical problems in a spirit of inquiry.

Course Website: All course content will be available via the course website on Canvas. The class is organized in modules (or course topics), with roughly one module for each week of the course. The course materials for each topic include: **content pages**, with written content, recorded videos, and

links to readings and other media; **quizzes**, which are based on the content pages; and **discussions**, which will provide opportunities for ongoing interaction with your classmates as well as the professor and the teaching assistants.

Please note that for all the deadlines for this course the relevant timezone is for the US west coast.

Internet Access: You are responsible for verifying that internet access at your location is reliable.

User Account: To participate in the online course, you must log in via your UCI user account.

Prerecorded Mini-Lectures: The course has numerous short ‘mini-lectures,’ that is, short videos featuring the instructor discussing the material covered in that module.

Readings: There are readings assigned for each module, all taken from the textbook, *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge), edited by yours truly. This should be very easy to get hold of; indeed, it is even available as an e-book in the library. Note that for all the topics we are covering here, you will find lots of useful additional readings in the two main (and completely free) online philosophy encyclopedias: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu>) and the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu>). (While both of these resources are good, the former tends to be superior to the latter). You are expected to read the material carefully and critically. For general guidance on writing a philosophy essay, please see the appendix to the course textbook, *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?*, which offers advice on how to write a philosophy essay. I’ve also uploaded a short mini-lecture on this topic onto the course webpage. See also the short essay by James Lenman, which you’ll find attached in the course webpage.

Small Group Discussion Board Assignments: Each week, you will be asked to work with a small group of your peers to respond to open-answer questions based on the course materials. A list of questions is provided below—it is entirely up to you which question or questions you wish to focus on. Your discussion board group has approximately 16 students. Participation in these discussion boards counts for 25% of your final grade. To receive full participation points, you will need to (i) post a substantive response to the open-answer questions by **Thursday, midnight, of that week**, and (ii) provide critical feedback to at least two of your peers by **Sunday, midnight, of that week**.

You will have an opportunity to earn up to 3% for your participation in weekly discussion boards, up to a maximum of 25% overall. Note that your lowest two scores in the discussion forums will be dropped when determining your final grade.

Discussion Grading Rubric:

- 1% for crafting an original response to the prompt.
- 1% for providing meaningful feedback to posts from classmates (per piece of feedback provided, up to a maximum of 2%).

A substantive post is generally >100 words and introduces a new idea or is a meaningful response to another person's post. When responding to another person's post, please either expand the thought, add additional insights, or respectfully disagree and explain why. Remember that we are after reasons and arguments, and not simply the statement of opinions.

Communication: We will send course announcements to the official course mailing list, so you should check your email regularly. Note that this mailing list goes to the email address that the registrar has for you. If you prefer to read your email on another account, you should set your account to forward your email to your preferred account. To reach the professor and the teaching assistants, please use the email addresses listed above. If you have questions about your grades for your discussion posts or your essays, then in the first instance please contact the teaching assistant assigned to your discussion group.

Quizzes: Each week you will be asked to answer some multiple-choice questions about the mini-lectures and the readings for that week. In addition, there is also a course comprehension quiz, which essentially just asks questions to make sure you have read and understood this syllabus, and a bumper quiz at the end of the course (for which you will be given a bit more time to complete). Note that with the exception of the course comprehension quiz, you have only one attempt at the quiz, so make sure you are prepared! The quizzes for a given week are due that week, so make sure you are aware of the deadline. Each correct answer in a quiz is worth 1 point. Note that some weeks the quizzes are quite large, and some weeks they are quite small—this just reflects that fact that some topics are more amenable to quizzes than others. Note that the final quiz—which you will

have longer to complete—will be a bumper quiz on the course as a whole. The way the grading works for the quizzes is that your lowest two quiz scores—**not** including course comprehension quiz and the bumper quiz at the end—will be ignored, with the grade determined by the proportion of correct answers you get on the rest of the quizzes. This means, of course, that you can miss two quizzes and still potentially get full marks (though obviously your chances of getting full marks will be greater if you do all the quizzes).

Essays: You will write two essays of 1000-1500 words each. You will find a list of essay questions and the relevant deadlines in the appendices below. Both papers will be reviewed by the professor/teaching assistants. **The papers must be submitted to <http://turnitin.com>—your TA will provide you with the relevant details.** If you have questions about the essays, then please don't hesitate to contact either your TA or myself. We are also willing to give feedback on essay plans (no more than one page), though naturally you will need to do this well in advance of the essay deadline. **Please note that in the interests of fairness, neither I nor the TAs will provide feedback on essay drafts.** Essays don't need to use a particular style of formatting or referencing. All that is important is that they are clearly written throughout (and full references are given somewhere, where appropriate). Note that we give guidance in the course itself in terms of what we are expecting from the essays, so you need to carefully attend to that advice.

Grading:

The breakdown for the 100% over the course is as follows:

- Quizzes: 25%

(NB. Your lowest two quiz scores are dropped when calculating your grade for this segment of the course, **not including the bumper quiz at the end of the course**).

- Discussion board assignments: 25%

(NB. Your lowest two discussion scores are dropped when calculating your grade for this segment of the course).

- First paper: 25%
- Second paper: 25%

Overall grading for the course follows the standard UCI grading scheme:

A+ = > 96.5%	A = > 93.5%	A- = > 90	B+ = > 86.5%
B = > 83.5%	B- = > 80%	C+ = > 76.5%	C = > 73.5%
C- = > 90%	D+ = > 66.5%	D = > 63.5%	D- = > 60%
F = < 60%			

Late Penalties: Late discussions or quizzes will get zero. If you have a legitimate excuse for being late, then submit the discussion post/quiz ASAP and let your TA know the reason for the lateness. Late essays will be deducted one point for each day, or part of the day, that the assessment is late (so, e.g., an essay that receives 22/25 that is two days late will be awarded a mark of 20/25, and so on). Again, if you have a legitimate excuse for your essay being late, then submit your essay ASAP and let your TA know as soon as you can the reason for the lateness.

Extra Credit: You can earn extra credit for this course by completing *The Anteater Virtues*, a new series of modules on the intellectual virtues and their relevance for your education at UCI that is newly available to all UCI students on Canvas. You should be able to self-enroll for this course here:

- <https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/enroll/KDYKND>

Students who successfully complete the entire course will earn an additional 2.5% on top of their overall grade for the course. We are still working out the details of how best to register your completion of the course, but in the meantime please make sure that you take a screenshot once you are done, as this will likely be required to prove completion.

Policies

Respect:

This class involves significant online discussion of topics on which you and your classmates may have differences of opinion. You may also have opinions that differ from those of the instructors. Please be respectful of classmates, the professor, and teaching assistants at all times.

Academic Honesty:

Please familiarize yourself with UC Irvine's academic honesty policy (<http://honesty.uci.edu>). The

consequences of academic dishonesty (e.g., course failure and not learning the material) are not worth the small artificial benefits to your grade and the impugning of your character. The penalty for any violation of academic integrity—including but not limited to plagiarism—is failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Services in the School of Humanities. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is always better to ask than to guess.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1:

TOPIC 1. INTRODUCING PHILOSOPHY

Reading: None

Watch: 'Introducing Philosophy Mini-Lecture', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Introducing Philosophy Mini-Lecture', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for this mini-lecture are also posted in Canvas).

TOPIC 2. ETHICAL THEORY

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 1.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 4', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 4', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 5', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 5', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 6', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Ethical Theory Mini-Lecture Part 6', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- What is utilitarianism? Critically assess the plausibility of this proposal.
- What would it mean to say that morality is relative? Is it?
- Why did Moore claim that moral properties are not natural properties? Was he right?
- What is the categorical imperative, and how is it meant to underpin a normative moral theory?
- What is virtue ethics, and what problems does it face?
- What is euthanasia, and why is it considered to be morally different to murder or suicide? Is it?
- What do you think is the best moral argument for vegetarianism? Does it work?

WEEK 2:

TOPIC 3. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 2.

Watch: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 4', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 4', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 5', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Political Philosophy Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- Does freedom entail the ability to have done otherwise?
- What is the difference between positive and negative freedom?
- What is republican freedom, and how does it differ from other conceptions of freedom?
- What is the harm principle? Does it pose a justified limitation on our freedom?
- What is the social contract? Is it binding?
- What is Rawls’ conception of a just society? Is it tenable?
- Is political theory inherently patriarchal?

WEEK 3:

TOPIC 4: AESTHETICS

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 3.

Watch: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 2A’, MP4 available on Canvas, **AND** ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 2B’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 2A’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas, **AND** ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 2B’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Aesthetics Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- What, if anything, would be wrong in simply saying that anything counts as art so long as this is what was intended by the creator of the artefact in question?
- What is the institutional account of art? Describe the dilemma that Wollheim’s poses for this view. Is it effective?
- What is the five-part account of aesthetic experience? What is problematic about it?
- What is the relationship between aesthetic judgement and aesthetic experience?
- Can two identical objects differ in their aesthetic properties?
- Can one properly form one’s aesthetic judgements via testimony from aesthetic experts?

WEEK 4:

TOPIC 5: EPISTEMOLOGY

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 4.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 6’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Epistemology Mini-Lecture Part 6’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- What is the classical account of knowledge?
- What are Gettier-style counterexamples, and how do they challenge the classical account of knowledge?
- What, if anything, is wrong with defining knowledge as justified true belief that is based on no false assumptions?
- Is knowledge instrumentally valuable? If so, why, and to what extent?
- Is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?
- What is the radical sceptical argument, and how does it trade on (i) sceptical hypotheses, and (ii) the closure principle?
- Can one coherently deny the closure principle?
- Is it possible to know the denials of radical sceptical hypotheses?
- Is ‘knows’ a context-sensitive term? If so, does this have any bearing on radical scepticism?

WEEK 5:

TOPIC 6: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 5.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Mind Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- What is the hard problem of consciousness? How hard is it?
- What is the ‘Mary’ problem against physicalism, and how effective is it?
- What are philosophical zombies, and what problem are they meant to pose for physicalism?
How plausible is the zombie argument?
- Is conceivability a guide to (metaphysical) possibility? If not, why might this be important?
- What is direct realism, and how does it differ from indirect realism?
- What is the argument from illusion, and how is it used to motivate indirect realism over direct realism? Is it effective?
- What is disjunctivism, and how does it respond to the argument from illusion?
- What is the feeling account of emotions, and what problems does it face?
- What is the cognitive account of emotions, and what problems does it face?
- What is the problem of fiction, and how do you think one should respond to it?
- Are emotions ever rational?

WEEK 6:

TOPIC 7: METAPHYSICS

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 6.

Watch: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Metaphysics Mini-Lecture Part 5’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- What are abstract objects? Are there any?
- What are the relative merits of nominalism, fictionalism, and Platonism about abstract objects?
- What’s the best account of properties: universals or tropes?
- Can the B-series capture everything there is about the nature of time? If not, what does it leave out?
- What’s the counterfactual theory of causation, and how compelling is it?
- What is the relationship between parts and the whole?
- Could there be no composite objects?
- What is the a priori/a posteriori distinction?

- ❑ What is an indispensability argument? What problems do such arguments face?
- ❑ What are the theoretical virtues, and how might we appeal to them to evaluate competing metaphysical theories?

WEEK 7:

TOPIC 8: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 7.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Science Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- ❑ What is the distinction between the manifest image and the scientific image?
- ❑ What is logical empiricism in the philosophy of science, and what problems does it face?
- ❑ What is meant by the idea that observation is theory-laden?

- ❑ What is the deductive-nomological model of scientific explanation?
- ❑ What is falsificationism, and how is supposed to demarcate genuine science from pseudo-science?
- ❑ What is scientific realism, and how does it account for scientific progress?
- ❑ What is scientific instrumentalism, and how does it differ from scientific realism?
- ❑ What is the underdetermination of theory by data thesis, and what implications might it have for scientific realism?
- ❑ What is the no miracles argument for scientific realism? How plausible is it?
- ❑ What is the incommensurability thesis, and what challenge does it pose for scientific realism?

WEEK 8:

TOPIC 9: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 8.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 1’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 2’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 3’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: ‘Philosophy of Religion Mini-Lecture Part 4’, MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- Does the very concept of God imply that He must exist?
- What is the problem of evil, and how compelling is it as an argument for God's non-existence?
- What is the difference between believing that God exists and having faith in God?
- Is it ever rational to have faith in God?

WEEK 9:

TOPIC 10: THE MEANING OF LIFE

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), part 9.

Watch: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 1', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 2', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

Watch: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'The Meaning of Life Mini-Lecture Part 3', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for these mini-lectures are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- Does it matter whether life is meaningful?

- Is God's existence a pre-requisite of a meaningful life?
- Does immortality have any essential role to play in an account of the meaning of life?
- Is death necessary for one's life to be meaningful?
- If all that exists is the natural world, then can life ever be meaningful?

WEEK 10:

TOPIC 11: RE-CAP & REVISIONS

Reading: *What is This Thing Called Philosophy?* (Routledge, 2016), Appendix: How To Write a Philosophy Essay.

Watch: 'How to Write a Philosophy Essay Mini-Lecture', MP4 available on Canvas.

Or Listen: 'How to Write a Philosophy Essay Mini-Lecture', MP3 (audio only) available on Canvas.

(NB. The powerpoints for this mini-lecture are also posted in Canvas).

Questions for Discussion Forum

- Post any questions you like about any aspect of the course!

Appendix 1: Essay 1

Details: This essay is due **noon Monday 9th November**. It should be between 1000-1500 words. **The papers must be submitted to <http://turnitin.com>—your TA will provide you with the relevant details.** Please select a question from the list below, and make sure to clearly state the question you are answering at the start of your essay.

Questions:

- What is utilitarianism? Critically assess the plausibility of this proposal.
- What is euthanasia, and why is it considered to be morally different to murder or suicide? Is it?
- What do you think is the best moral argument for vegetarianism? Does it work?
- Does freedom entail the ability to have done otherwise?
- What is the harm principle? Does it pose a justified limitation on our freedom?
- What is Rawls' conception of a just society? Is it tenable?
- What, if anything, would be wrong in simply saying that anything counts as art so long as this is what was intended by the creator of the artefact in question?
- Can two identical objects differ in their aesthetic properties?
- Can one properly form one's aesthetic judgements via testimony from aesthetic experts?
- What are Gettier-style counterexamples, and how do they challenge the classical account of knowledge?
- Is knowledge more valuable than mere true belief?
- Is 'knows' a context-sensitive term?

Appendix 2: Essay 2

Details: This essay is due **noon Monday 14th December**. It should be between 1000-1500 words. **The papers must be submitted to <http://turnitin.com>—your TA will provide you with the relevant details.** Please select a question from the list below, and make sure to clearly state the question you are answering at the start of your essay.

Questions:

- What is the ‘Mary’ problem against physicalism, and how effective is it?
- What are philosophical zombies, and what problem are they meant to pose for physicalism? How plausible is the zombie argument?
- What is the argument from illusion, and how is it used to motivate indirect realism over direct realism? Is it effective?
- What is the problem of fiction, and how do you think one should respond to it?
- Can the B-series capture everything there is about the nature of time? If not, what does it leave out?
- What are abstract objects? Are there any?
- What is the most persuasive mereological account of the relationship between parts and wholes? Defend your answer.
- What is an indispensability argument? What problems do such arguments face?
- How should we demarcate genuine science from pseudo-science?
- Critically evaluate the merits of scientific realism by focusing on what you take to be either the strongest argument in its defence or the strongest argument against it.
- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- What is the problem of evil, and how compelling is it as an argument for God’s non-existence?
- Is it ever rational to have faith in God?
- Does immortality have any essential role to play in an account of the meaning of life?
- Is death necessary for one’s life to be meaningful?
- If all that exists is the natural world, then can life ever be meaningful?