

Instructor: Dr. Wai-hung Wong

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Office hours: MWF 10:00-11:00 & 12:00-1:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a General Education course, satisfying Area C3. The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the main philosophical problems by engaging them in critical thinking. The leading idea is that the best way to learn philosophy is to learn to *philosophize*, rather than to memorize facts about philosophers and their arguments. To achieve this aim, there have to be small group discussions and presentations besides lectures. The course focuses on philosophical problems in the theory of knowledge, metaphysics, and the philosophy of mind; topics covered include:

- the nature of philosophical doubt (how far can you doubt your own beliefs, including the most ordinary ones that you rely on in your everyday life?)
- rationalism versus empiricism (what is the ultimate source of knowledge? reason or experience?)
- materialism versus dualism (is everything that exists material? what is the relation between mind and body?)
- arguments for the existence of God
- free will and determinism (given that the physical world is governed by causal laws, can our will and our action still be free?)
- personal identity (what is it for you now and you ten years ago to be the very same person?)

TEXTS

- Adam Morton, *Philosophy in Practice: An Introduction to the Main Questions*, 2nd edition (Blackwell 2004)
- Additional material posted on WebCT

GRADING

Your course grade is based on the score you get out of a total of 200 points:

- (i) 40 points for attendance: you may miss 3 classes with no penalty; after that, you lose 2 point for each class you miss unless you have very good reason for missing that class.
- (ii) 120 points for 6 quizzes: you get at most 20 points for each quiz.
- (iii) 40 points for a reading report

* *This class has no final exam.*

Grade conversion:

181-200 points : A	171-180 points : A-	161-170 points : B+
151-160 points : B	141-150 points : B-	131-140 points : C+
121-130 points : C	111-120 points : C-	101-110 points : D
100 and below : F		

Lecture Schedule

1 st week	The Contract (pp.xii-xv) Certainty and Doubt: 1.1-1.5, 1.7
2 nd week	Jonathan Glover, "Acceptance: The Case of Jim Keegstra" Michael Shermer, "Jonestown and 'Confirmation Basis'" Certainty and Doubt: 1.9- 1.11, 1.14
3 rd week	Sources of Conviction: 2.1-2.11 Jonathan E. Adler, "Open Minds and the Argument from Ignorance"
4 th week	Rationalism: 3.1-3.13
5 th week	Induction and Deduction: 5.1-5.5, 5.7
6 th week	Induction and Deduction: 5:8-5:12
7 th week	The Retreat from Certainty: 6.1-6.5, 6.10
8 th week	Empiricism: 9.1-9.12 Richard Dawkins, "Good and Bad Reasons for Believing"
9 th week	Beyond Empiricism: 10.1, 10.3-10.8
10 th week	Beyond Empiricism: 10.9, 10:11-10.13
11 th week	Materialism and Dualism: 12.1-12.4; 12.6
12 th week	Materialism and Dualism: 12.4, 12.6, 12.8-12.12
13 th week	The Metaphysics of Color: 14.1-14.3
14 th week	Free will and Determinism: 14.4-14.7
15 th week	Personal Identity: 14.8-14.10 Meanings of Lives: 14:11

Quiz and Assignment Schedule

9/11	First Quiz
9/30	Second Quiz
10/16	Third Quiz
10/19	Reading Report
10/30	Fourth Quiz
11/18	Fifth Quiz
12/9	Sixth Quiz