



South China Normal University

SFS International Summer Session

Introduction to Philosophy

Term: July 15th –August 9th, 2019

Instructor: Prof. Dyron Daugherty

Course Description

This course is designed to strengthen your thinking skills. It won't teach you what to think (figuring out what to think will be up to you), but it will show you how to think clearly and deeply about important issues—issues like knowledge, freedom, and justice. Together we'll uncover and sharpen some vital intellectual tools and then apply those tools to big ideas and to specific real-world situations.

Course Goal

Upon faithful completion of the course requirements (as outlined below), you will be able to:

1. Describe some of the central questions that guide philosophical inquiry.
2. Apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills to those central questions.
3. Compare different answers to those central questions.
4. Gather and evaluate evidence in favor of those answers.
5. Propose your own variations on those answers.

Course Readings

1. Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?* Oxford University Press, 1987.
2. Bruce & Barbone, *Just the Arguments*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Grading Scale

Percentage	Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
< 60	F



Grading

- Participation: attendance, attitude, course notes, oral participation: 25%
 - Oral articulation of a key philosophical argument in front of class: 15%
 - 15-20-minute office debate with another student over a contemporary idea: 15%
 - Write a persuasive letter to someone using a key philosophical argument: 20%
 - Comprehensive Final Exam: 25%
- **Participation (20%):** Based on attendance, attitude, and oral participation in class. Each week you will also be asked to give the professor your class notebook (containing course notes and textbook reading notes) so he can grade the thoroughness and quality of your notes.
 - **Oral articulation of a key philosophical argument (20%):** This will take place in front of the class and should last around 5-10 minutes. You will be graded mainly on clarity and thoroughness.
 - **20-minute debate with another student over a contemporary idea (20%):** You will have a debate in the professor’s office on a contemporary idea. With professor’s approval you and your debate partner will choose the idea (examples: war, poverty, vegetarianism, loans, climate change).
 - **Persuasive letter (20%):** Students will write a letter to someone attempting to persuade them of a particular idea. You will employ a key philosophical argument to persuade them or dissuade them of a particular idea. The professor’s approval is required for your topic.
 - **Comprehensive Final Exam (20%):** The Final Exam is comprehensive and will be made up of short answer, fill in the blank, true/false, and other evaluative methods.

Course Schedules

Day	Date	Topic & Assignments	Readings
Mon	July 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Introduction to the Course • Syllabus Review • Introduction 	Nagel, ch. 1
Tue	July 16	How do we know anything?	Nagel, ch. 2
Wed	July 17	Other minds	Nagel, ch. 3
Thu	July 18	The Mind-Body Problem	Nagel, ch. 4
Fri	July 19	The Meaning of Words	Nagel, ch. 5
Mon	July 22	Free Will	Nagel, ch. 6



Tue	July 23	Right and Wrong	Nagel, ch. 7
Wed	July 24	Justice	Nagel, ch. 8
Thur	July 25	Death	Nagel, ch. 9
Fri	July 26	The Meaning of Life	Nagel, ch. 10
Mon	July 29	Aquinas's Five Ways	Bruce & Barbone, ch. 1
Tue	July 30	Pascal's Wager	B&B, ch. 5
Wed	July 31	Hume's argument against miracles	B&B, ch. 10
Thur	Aug 1	Nietsche's Death of God	B&B, ch. 12
Fri	Aug 2	Ockham's Razor	B&B, ch. 13
Mon	Aug 5	Film & Discussion: Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl	
Tue	Aug 6	The Cogito Arguments of Descartes and Augustine	B&B, ch. 35
Wed	Aug 7	Aristotle and the Argument to End All Arguments	B&B, ch. 50
Thur	Aug 8	Mill's Proof of Utilitarianism	B&B, ch. 57
Fri	Aug 9	*FINAL EXAM*	