

**Duquesne University**  
**McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts**  
**Basic Philosophical Questions**

**Contact Information**

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*Office Hours:* T 1:00 – 3:00 or By Appointment

**Course Details**

Fall 2018

UCOR 132-10

College Hall 225

MWF 2:00 – 2:50

**Course Description**

The focus of this introductory course in philosophy is understanding the notion of the self and its experience in society. Specifically, we will examine the various ways in which we experience the world can be shaped by aspects of who we are, whether that be our class, sex, gender, race, or all of them collectively. Consequently, we will examine what it means to be that these aspects ourselves are affected by social and historical contexts. Historically, these issues have been addressed philosophically by minority perspectives, whose experiences attest to being shaped through their difference to being a dominant group. By working with diverse perspectives, we can learn not only how the experiences of others reveal certain aspects of the role of society in shaping experience, but also how these same aspects affect our own experience in implicit ways. Thus, this course will show how who and what we are is often necessarily entwined with who and what others are.

**Learning Outcomes**

*Throughout this course, students will learn to:*

- Read and comprehend difficult theoretical texts.
- Understand and explain various terms drawn from the texts, and apply these terms to their own circumstances.
- Speak articulately about the positions held by the authors, and express their own assessments of these positions.
- Identify similarities and differences, convergences and divergences, shared opinions and points of contention between the various authors we read.
- Develop their own views supported with arguments regarding the themes of the course by using the theoretical resources provided by the authors.
- Write clearly and articulately in order to express the views held by the authors and the views held by the student, and to justify those views.

**Course Objectives**

This goal of this course is to become aware of the various social dimensions that who we are and how we experience the world. By reading texts from diverse standpoints we will not only learn about the ways in which the authors explain how one's experience is shaped through these social forces, but we will also learn to listen responsively to the voices and experiences of individuals whose experience is unlike our own.

**Required Texts**

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. ISBN: 978-0872201927

## Course Requirements

Students will be evaluated by assignments in four different categories. Within each category, students may choose among different options the assignment they wish to complete.

### 1. Participation (20%): *Either* Protocol & Participation, *or* Participation only

- 1a. Protocol (10%): Students can provide a 5 minute in-class presentation of the reading. The presentation should summarize the material from the reading and raise questions for discussion. Students will sign up for the in-class presentation at the beginning of the class.
- 1b. Meetings & In-Class Participation (10%/20%): Students are required to participate *actively* in class throughout the semester. This includes not only reading the texts for class and general attentiveness during class, but also asking or answering questions during the lectures. If students are finding that they are uncomfortable participating in class or would otherwise like to make up for missed participation points, an in-person meeting with the instructor to discuss the material in the class will also contribute to satisfying this requirement.

### 2. Reading Comprehension (20%): Any combination of quizzes and reading responses for a total of ten (10) assignments. Only one assignment per week will be count for credit.

- 2a. Quizzes (2%): Students can complete small quizzes based on the material covered in class. Students will answer questions about the central points of the reading for the week. Quizzes will be open note and open book, but will be timed, such that reading the texts and having well organized notes will enable a student to succeed. Quizzes will be completed through Blackboard no later than the *Saturday* of each week.
- 2b. Reading Responses (2%): Students can write one-page, double-spaced responses to the week's readings. The purpose of this assignment is to have students to regularly engage with the text by addressing points in they found convincing or unconvincing, asking questions, raising difficulties, or posing counterarguments. Responses will be submitted through Blackboard no later than the *Thursday evening* of each week

### 3. Paper Assignments (40%): *Either* 4 short papers; *or* 2 short papers & 1 long paper; *or* 2 long papers

- 3a. Short Paper (10%): Students can write 1000-word papers. These assignments will involve reconstructing arguments from a single text. Students will be required to choose from topics provided by the instructor and will submit the papers through Blackboard. The deadlines for these papers will be
  - *First Paper*: Sunday, September 23, 11:59 PM
  - *Second Paper*: Sunday, October 28, 11:59 PM
  - *Third Paper*: Sunday, November 18, 11:59 PM
  - *Fourth Paper*: Sunday, December 9, 11:59 PM
- 3b. Long Paper (20%): Students can write 2000-word papers. These assignments will involve addressing a claim, theory, argument, or position across two different authors. Students may choose from topics provided by the instructor or may propose a topic to be approved of by the instructor. Papers will be submitted through Blackboard. The deadlines for these papers will be
  - *First Paper*: Sunday, October 7, 11:59 PM
  - *Second Paper*: Sunday, December 9, 11:59 PM

**4. Written Examination (20%):** *Either 2 half-term Exams or 1 cumulative final exam*

- **4a. Half-term Exam (10%):** Students can complete exams that covers material from the first and second half of the course. Exam questions will involve reproducing and explaining various positions, concepts, and arguments in the course readings. The first exam (midterm exam) will be completed online through Blackboard and will be open book and open note. The second exam will be taken in class during finals week at the university scheduled time, listed in (4b).
  - *Midterm Deadline:* Saturday, October 13, 11:59 PM
- **4b. Cumulative Final Exam (20%):** Students can take an exam that covers the material from the entire course. Exam questions will involve reproducing and explaining various positions, concepts, and arguments in the course readings. The exam for this class will be taken in class during finals week at the university scheduled time.
  - *Final Exam:* Friday, December 14, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** There will be no penalization for missing class sessions. However, since class participation is a component of the student's grade, regular attendance is expected.

**Blackboard:** This course will utilize Blackboard for paper submissions, PDF reading distribution, reading question dissemination, reading quiz submission, and midterm exam completion.

**Grade Accessibility:** Given the complexity of the assignment structure for the course, it may not be possible for me to use Blackboard's Grade Center to calculate grades and have them available to you (though I will try). If not by Blackboard, I will be keeping track of all of your assignment scores and can provide you with your cumulative score at any point during the course.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of cell phones during class will not be permitted. The use of computers and tablets in class will be *provisionally* permitted for access to the readings and note-taking purposes only. If students are found abusing this privilege, the instructor reserves the right to withdraw this privilege, and to prohibit the use of electronic devices entirely. Failure to comply with this policy will result in a lower participation grade.

**Missed Exams:** Make-up exams will not be allowed, except in the case of documented emergencies or illnesses. Arrangements for this will be made on a case-by-case basis.

**Late Papers:** Papers will be due on the date specified. Paper grades will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade per day late (including weekends and holidays).

**Cheating:** Cheating on the exam will result in an immediate failure on that assignment.

**Academic Integrity:** Duquesne's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at this link: <https://www.duq.edu/academics/university-catalogs/2018-2019-undergraduate/academic-policies/academic-integrity>

My own understanding of academic integrity is that I am evaluating how well the student understands the course material through the work they personally put into the course. This work

includes closely reading the texts and writing papers that reflect the student's understanding of the texts, unassisted by any other sources. If a student submits a paper that includes source material other than the texts assigned for this class, they are not fulfilling the requirements of the assignment, and will therefore fail that assignment.

Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations if needed. If you need accommodations, please contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services in 309 Duquesne Union (412-396-6657) as soon as possible. Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively.

Grading Scale: The relation of each assignment to the student's final grade is documented above. Here is the breakdown of the correlation between number and letter grades:

- A 93-100%; A- 90-92.99%
- B+ 87-89.99%; B 83-86.99%; B- 80-82.99%
- C+ 77-79.99%; C 70-76.99%
- D 60%-69.99%
- F <60%

### Course Schedule (Subject to Revision)

(Readings marked with \* are slightly longer, so students should plan their schedules accordingly to be able to complete the reading assignments)

Wk	Date	#	Readings
<b><i>Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and the Self</i></b>			
1	Mon, 8/27	1	<i>Introduction &amp; Syllabus</i>
	Wed, 8/29	2	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> , Ch. 12-13, 15
	Fri, 8/31	3	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , Meditation One & Two
2	Mon, 9/3	-	<b>LABOR DAY</b>
	Wed, 9/5	4	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> , Meditation Three
	Fri, 9/7	5	<i>Discussion</i>
3	Mon, 9/10	6	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> , Meditation Four
	Wed, 9/12	7	Princess Elizabeth & Descartes, <i>Correspondence</i> (pp. 61-73)
	Fri, 9/14	8	<i>Discussion</i>
4	Mon, 9/17	9	Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , Section 2 & 4
	Wed, 9/19	10	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , Section 5.1 & 7
	Fri, 9/21	11	<i>Discussion</i>
5	Mon, 9/24	12	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> , "Of Personal Identity"
	Wed, 9/26	13	Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Parts 2 & 9
	Fri, 9/28	14	<i>Discussion</i>
<b><i>Foundations for Thinking the Self in Society: Self, Other, and World</i></b>			
	Mon, 10/1	15	Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage"

6	Wed, 10/3	16	Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage"
	Fri, 10/5	17	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 10/8	18	Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"
7	Wed, 10/10	19	Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"
	Fri, 10/12	20	<i>Discussion</i>
<b><i>The Embodied Self: Race &amp; Gender</i></b>			
	Mon, 10/15	21	de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , "Introduction"
8	Wed, 10/17	22	*de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , "Woman in Love"
	Fri, 10/19	23	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 10/22	24	Butler, "Sex and Gender in <i>The Second Sex</i> "
9	Wed, 10/24	25	Butler, "Performative Acts & Gender Constitution"
	Fri, 10/26	26	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 10/29	27	Mills, "Non-Cartesian <i>Sums</i> : Philosophy and the African-American Experience"
10	Wed, 10/31	28	*Mills, "But What Are You <i>Really?</i> The Metaphysics of Race"
	Fri, 11/2	29	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 11/5	30	*Fanon, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man"
11	Wed, 11/7	31	The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement"
	Fri, 11/9	32	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 11/12	33	Ahmed, "The Phenomenology of Whiteness"
12	Wed, 11/14	34	Hopkins, "Gender Treachery"
	Fri, 11/16	35	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 11/19	-	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS</b>
	Wed, 11/21	-	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS</b>
	Fri, 11/23	-	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS</b>
<b><i>Conclusion: Thinking and Rethinking the Self</i></b>			
	Mon, 11/26	36	TBD
13	Wed, 11/28	37	TBD
	Fri, 11/30	38	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 12/3	39	Plato, <i>Republic</i> V & VI (473a-506d)
14	Wed, 12/5	40	Plato, <i>Republic</i> VI & VII (506d-521d)
	Fri, 12/7	41	<i>Discussion</i>
	Mon, 12/10	42	<i>Review</i>