



## East China Normal University International Summer Session

### PHI 12 Introduction to Philosophy

**Term: July 5 – August 8, 2018**  
**Instructor: Keith McPartland**  
**Home Institution: Williams College**  
**Office hours: TBD**  
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**Teaching Assistant: TBD**

#### Course Overview

This course is an introduction to some central questions in philosophy:

- What can we know?
- Can we prove that God exists?
- What is the relation between the mind and the body?
- What is a person and what is it for the same person to exist over time?
- Do human beings have free will?

The course will begin with around Rene Descartes' justly famous *Meditations on First Philosophy*. As we reconstruct and evaluate Descartes' arguments, we will learn how to read historical texts in philosophy. We'll also see some of the questions that philosophers have struggled with for years. After Descartes, we will move on to a careful study of two central philosophical issues. First we will examine the nature of personal identity. Next we will look at the connected issues of free will and moral responsibility.

#### Course Goals:

A student who satisfactorily completes this course should:

1. Learn how to present and analyze arguments in historical texts;
2. Become familiar with key aspects of number of central philosophical problems;
3. Improve his or her critical thinking skills;
4. Have a chance to think more carefully about issues of central importance to our understanding of the human condition;
5. Realize that philosophy is both deep and fun!

#### Required Texts:

The following texts are from the Amazon Kindle store. You don't actually need a Kindle: you can download a Kindle app for free from Amazon and then read it on any computer



platform. It is very important that you get the translation indicated. I have provided the ISBN and ASIN codes. In the past, some students have found it easier to obtain the book before they returned to China.

In addition to these texts, there will be a number of required texts available online.

Rene Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy* translated by John Cottingham. Cambridge University Press; 2 edition (April 10, 2017). ISBN-10: 1107665736. ISBN-13:978-1107665736. ASIN: B00CF0JTIM (Kindle)

Fischer, Kane, Pereboom, and Vargas. *Four Views on Free Will*. Wiley-Blackwell; 1st edition (September 11, 2007). **ISBN-10:** 1405134860. **ISBN-13:** 978-1405134866. **ASIN:** B002M3SV9K

Amy Kind: *Persons and Personal Identity* **ASIN:** B016DHKSN2 (Kindle) ISBN-13: 978-0745654324 (Paperback)

**Movies:** We will watch a number of movies over the course of the semester and you will be expected to be able to talk about these movies in light of the course material. I will organize screenings of the movies for the class, but you might want to watch the movies on your own as well. *Memento. The Prestige. The Matrix. Stranger than Fiction. Being John Malkovich.*

## **Course Hours**

The course has 25 class sessions in total. Each class session is 110 minutes in length, for a total of 2750 minutes of in-class time. The course meets from Monday to Friday. ECNU awards 4 credits for this course. Different universities may count course credits differently. Consult officials at your own home institution.

## **Attendance**

Summer school is very intensive and to be successful, students need to attend every class. Occasionally, due to illness or other unavoidable circumstance, a student may need to miss a class. ECNU policy requires a medical certificate to be excused. Any absence may impact on the student's grade. Moreover, **ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 3 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as an absence.** In addition to attending every class, students will be expected to complete the reading assignments prior to class and to arrive ready to participate in class discussion. I will hold a number of evening review sessions over the course of the semester. Your performance in the class will be greatly aided by attending these review sessions.

## **Grading Policy**

ECNU awards grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, D, and F. Most colleges and universities do not award transfer credit for grades of D or F.



In this course, grading will be based on the following:

- 30% First and Second Exam (July 13 and July 27)
- 30% Papers (Due July 20 and August 7)
- 25% Final Exam (August 8)
  - 15% Short papers, quizzes, preparation, participation.

***General expectations:*** 

Students are expected to:

Attend all classes and be responsible for all material covered in class and otherwise assigned. Any unexcused absence may impact a student's grade. Moreover, ECNU policy is that a student who has more than 2 absences will fail the course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence.

Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class.

Make sure that you bring your book to class every day.

Review the previous day's notes before class; make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading

Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time.

Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during class. Students using electronic devices in a way unrelated to class will be asked to leave and will be marked absent. Repeated offenses will result in penalties to your final grade.

Refrain from private conversations during the class period.



### ***Tentative Course Schedule***

The planned schedule sketched out below may be modified to suit the interests or abilities of the enrolled students or to take advantage of special opportunities or events that may arise during the term.

#### **WEEKS ZERO and ONE (July 5 – July 13): *Descartes' Meditations***

- July 5 (Th): Introduction. The nature of argument.  
Read: No Reading
- July 6: (F) Meditation I. Certainty and Skepticism.  
Read: *Descartes*: Mediation I.
- July 9 (M): Meditation II. I think, therefore, I am.  
Read: Mediation II.
- July 10 (T): Meditation III. The criterion of truth and the existence of God.  
Read: Meditation III.
- July 11 (W) Meditation III and IV God and Error  
Read: *Meditations III and IV*.
- July 12 (Th) In-Class Movie and Discussion.  
**First Paper Assigned**
- July 13 (F) **First In-Class Exam.**  
Read: No new readings.

#### **WEEK TWO (July 16 – July 20): *Meditations and Mind and Body***

**I will be away on July 16 and 17. You should use these days to get ahead on your reading and to complete your first paper.**

- July 16 (M) Continue to work on first paper. Get ahead on your reading.  
Reading: Meditations V and VI. Additional material on Mind-Body Problem.
- July 17 (T): Continue to work on first paper. Get ahead on reading.  
Reading: Meditations V and VI. Additional material on Mind-Body Problem.
- July 18 (W): Mediation V. Ontological Arguments  
Reading : Meditation V. Objections and Replies.
- July 19 (Th): Meditation VI. Descartes on the Distinction of Soul and Body.



Reading: Meditation VI. Objections and Replies.

July 20 (F): More on the Mind-Body Problem.

**First Paper Due.**

Reading: To Be Announced

**WEEK THREE (July 23 - July 27): *Personal Identity***

July 23 (M): What is a Person? The Memory Theory of Personal Identity.

Readings: Locke and Selections from Kind

July 24 (T): Criticisms of the memory theory. Animalsim.

Readings: Butler, Reid. Kind. Olsen.

July 25 (W): There are no persons. Hume and His Critics.  
Hume.

July 26 (Th) Does identity really matter?

July 27 (F) **Second Exam.**  
**Second Paper Assigned.**

**WEEK FOUR (July 30 - August 8): *Free-Will and Moral Responsibility***

July 30 (M): The Problem of Free Will and Moral Responsibility. Future Contingents.  
Foreknowledge. Determinism. Indeterminism.

July 31 (T): Libertarianism  
Read: Kane in *Four Views*

August 1 (W) Compatibilism  
Read: Fischer in *Four Views*

August 2 (Th) Hard Incompatibilism  
Read: Pereboom in *Four Views*

August 3 (F) Revisionism.  
Read: Vargas in *Four Views*

August 6 (M) Responses and Replies.  
Read: Kane and Fischer Replies in *Four Views*

August 7 (T) Responses and Replies  
Read: Pereboom and Vargas in *Four Views*  
**Final Paper Due**

August 8 (W) **Final Exam**



## ***Academic Honesty***

Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty. Specifically, unless otherwise directed by the professor, students may not consult other students, books, notes, electronic devices or any other source, on examinations. Failure to abide by this may result in a zero on the examination, or even failure in the course.

Academic communities depend on trust. The worst offense in an academic community is to represent someone else's work as your own, whether it be cut and pasting from the Internet or copying from another student. Philosophy is a cooperative endeavor, and I encourage you to speak with other students, friends and family members about this course. Cooperate, but don't copy! If you ever have any doubt whether what you are doing constitutes cheating, please ask the professor.