

PHIL 28101: Appearance and Reality: Perspectives Across Philosophical Traditions

Time and Place: Monday/Wednesday, 3:00-4:20, Social Sciences Rsch Bldg 401

Instructor: Ryan Simonelli

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Office Hours: Fridays 12:40-2:40 or by appointment in Rosenwald 216. Link for sign up sheet [here](#) (if you're looking at this digitally) and on the Canvas site.

1 Course Overview

Is the world really as it appears to be in everyday experience, or is the world of everyday experience really a world of mere appearances, radically unlike the reality that lies behind it? This is arguably the most fundamental philosophical question that one can ask, and it has occupied a central place in perhaps every philosophical tradition that has arisen across the globe. In this class, we will consider how this question arises across two distinct philosophical traditions—Classical and Modern European Philosophy, on the one hand, and Classical Indian philosophy, on the other—seeking to compare and contrast the different philosophical impulses, approaches, and answers to this question across these traditions. We'll primarily concern ourselves with the existence and nature of two sorts of things: (1) material objects, such as tables and chairs, and (2) persons or "selves," such as you or me. Historical readings will be from key figures in the different philosophical canons, such as Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Hume, and Kant in Europe, and Vasubandhu, Dharmakīrti and Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, and Śaṅkara in India. Historical readings will be supplemented by works by contemporary philosophers. (B)

2 Course Requirements and Expectations

Readings: The main readings for the course are primary sources in philosophy, drawn from different philosophical traditions from centuries or millenia ago. I will not sugarcoat it: *these primary readings will be difficult*. Though the themes and philosophical ideas will be related in many cases, the terminology that the philosophers use will be drawn from their own philosophical tradition, and it will often be foreign and puzzling. For this reason, while the main philosophical

reading are all that you are expected to do, I have also included background readings and secondary readings that may be helpful. *These are all optional.* Read these things as your time and interest dictates, but do not feel like you need to understand everything in the primary readings before coming to class. Additionally, for many of the readings, I have included supplementary readings that may be interesting if you wish to pursue the topics further, for instance, in one of your papers. Once again, these are all optional.

There are no books you need to buy for this course. All of the readings for the course are pdfs posted on the Canvas, organized by modules for each class. Once again, the syllabus/Canvas may look overwhelming with all of these additional readings, but it is constructed in this way so that you don't have to worry about finding good secondary sources to help you understand the main readings. If you're looking to explore further topics not on there, ask me and I can point you to other readings.

Papers: The main medium in which philosophy is done is argumentative papers, and so the main assignments for the course are argumentative papers where you will be doing philosophy yourself. In these papers, you'll be charitably reconstructing some philosophical argument or idea found in one of the primary texts, and critically responding to it with an argument of your own, generally, either supporting it in some way or objecting to it. We will spend some class-time before your first papers are due talking about how to write a philosophy paper, but, in the meantime, a helpful guide can be found here: www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html

There will be two (or three) papers, a shorter one (4-5 pages) worth 25% of the total grade, and a longer one (8-10 pages), worth 50% of the total grade. If you'd rather write two independent short papers on two different topics (4-5 pages each, each worth 25% of the total grade), you can also do that, submitting both papers as your final paper (you can also submit one earlier, if you'd like feedback before submitting your third). I will provide a running list of possible essay topics as the quarter progresses, but you're also welcome to write on whatever topic you'd like to write on. Just make sure that you have a clear aim in your paper (something you're trying to show) and that you make this aim clear to your reader (me). If you're unsure whether a potential topic is a good one, just send me an email or come to my office hours.

Extensions and Late Work Policy: I understand that things (both academic and non-academic) can come up that make it difficult to complete work by the designated due dates and that a few days of extra time can sometimes make the difference between a bad paper and a good one. So, if there's a legitimate reason you cannot turn in your paper on time, I'm generally willing to grant an extension. The amount of extra time granted will be decided on a case by case basis, based on needs. If you do need an extension, please do so as soon as you know you'll need it. Late work submitted without an extension having been granted will be penalized by 5 points for each day that it is late.

Participation: Participation is worth 25% of the total grade. This comes in three forms.

In-Class Engagement: 10% of the total grade is engagement in class, both in the lecture portions and discussion portions. Class discussion is a collaborative enterprise, and, as such, I see optimal engagement in class discussion as consisting in listening to one's peers no less than in speaking oneself. So, don't feel like you need to talk a bunch to be engaged; I can tell if you're engaged, even if you aren't talking all the time.

Laptops: I do not have a strict policy prohibiting the use of laptop computers in class, since I know they are useful for some people to take notes and to have the readings at hand. However, I'd suggest using a laptop in class as little as possible, since it is much easier to be engaged in class if you don't have a screen in front of you. If you're constantly engaged with what's on your computer screen rather than with what's going on in class, this portion of your grade will suffer.

Attendance: Additionally, you of course cannot engage in class if you don't attend class. So, while I do not have a strict attendance policy, if you miss a significant portion of class, this portion of your grade will suffer. I understand that things can come up that makes attending class impossible on certain occasions, and, if you do have a genuine reason for missing more than a couple classes, please let me know as soon as possible and we can arrange an alternative way for you to make up this portion of your grade.

The Hand/Finger Convention: I find it to be helpful for my own moderation to deploy the following convention:

- **Hand:** Raising a new question or making a new comment.
- **Finger:** Directly responding to or building on what someone else has just said.

Generally, if someone has a finger, I will go directly to them so they can jump directly into the discussion. Sometimes, it might not be completely clear to you whether a thought constitutes a hand or a finger, and I understand that, but please try to follow this policy to the best of your ability, and not abuse the finger convention to jump in with what really should be a hand.

Discussion Posts: Weekly discussion posts are worth 10% of the total grade. For *one of the two classes* each week you are expected to submit a discussion question or a reply to a discussion thread before 8am the day of class. These can be very simple questions or replies, and you don't

need to spend a lot of time constructing them. One sentence is totally fine, and, as a general rule, they shouldn't be more than three sentences long. The point of these discussions is just to get you thinking critically about the texts before class and to give us a jumping-off point in class discussion. Discussion questions and responses are to be submitted in the "Discussions" section of the Canvas site, and the discussion post for each class can also be found in the "Modules" page of the Canvas site.

One Office Hours Meeting: I'd like to chat with everyone one on one at some point during the quarter, just to hear what you're thinking about. So, there's one required meeting with me during office hours (or, if the office hours don't work for you, some other time that we can arrange), worth 5% of the total grade. This is a totally no-pressure thing, and it can be to talk about whatever you'd like. So, it can be to discuss ideas for a paper you're working on, or something in the readings that you didn't understand, or to ask about some topic in the course that you'd like to dive deeper into. If you and a friend or two have been talking a lot about the material in the class together, and you'd like to do this meeting as a small group (of no more than three), you can also do that—just sign up together. You're, of course, more than welcome to meet with me more than once during the quarter (I'm always happy to talk about philosophy). So, feel free to sign up for my office hours every week if you'd like. But you're required to sign up at least once.

3 Diversity and Accessibility

Diversity: As an instructor, I am actively committed to creating an inclusive classroom environment where diverse backgrounds and viewpoints are recognized, respected, and valued. If there is anything you believe I should be doing differently, I welcome any feedback both during and outside of class. I pledge to take any comments regarding my teaching or content seriously and without defensiveness.

Accessibility: The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by Student Disability Services (SDS) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

Phone: (773) 702-6000

Email: disabilities@uchicago.edu

4 Class Schedule

Note: This is subject to change as the quarter progresses! Check the Canvas for the most up-to-date syllabus and the modules for the most up-to-date readings

Class 1, Monday, 3/18: Introduction

Optional Reading:

Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, Introduction (short excerpt)

Class 2 Wednesday 3/20: Two Truths in Contemporary Scientific Thought

Main Readings:

Edington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, Introduction
Sellars "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," short excerpt

Optional Secondary Reading:

O'Shea, *Wilfrid Sellars*, Chapter 1

Optional Supplementary Readings:

Stebbing, *Philosophy and Physicists*, Chapter 3

Class 3 Monday 3/25: The Buddhist Theory of No-Self and the Two Truths in Early Indian Buddhism

Main Readings:

Excerpts from the Anatta-lakkhana Sutta, Mahā-Nidāna Sutta,
and Milindapañha
Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism*, Chapter 1

Optional Background Reading:

Carpenter - *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, Chapter 1

Class 4 Wednesday 3/28: The Refined Metaphysics of Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti

Main Readings:

Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakosa* V 25-27
Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika* excerpts
Thakchoe, *The Two Truths in Indian Buddhism*, Chapter 2

Optional Secondary Readings:

Gold, *Paving the Great Way*, Chapter 2
Dunne, *Foundations of Dharmakīrti's Philosophy* Chapter 2

Class 5, Wednesday, 3/28: Hume's Empiricism: the Self

Main Readings:

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections 2 and 3

Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, "Personal Identity"

Optional Secondary/Supplementary Reading:

Garfield "Hume and Candrakirti on the Self and Person"

Class 6, Wednesday, 4/3: Hume's Empiricism: Causation

Main Readings:

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections 4 and 7 (Section 5 is optional)

Class 7, Monday, 4/8: Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Critique of Causation

Main Readings:

Nāgārjuna, *MMK*, 1 (Siderits and Katsura's commentary is optional)

Candrakīrti, *Madhyamakavatara* Chapter 6, lines 1-38

Optional Primary Commentaries:

Candrakīrti - *Lucid Exposition*, Chapter 1

Tsongkhapa - *Ocean of Reasoning*, Chapter 1

Optional Secondary Readings:

Westerhoff - *Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka*, Chapter 2

Class 8, Wednesday, 4/10: Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka: Critique of Substance

Main Readings:

Nāgārjuna, *MMK*, 15, 22 (reading Siderits and Katsura's commentary is optional)

Candrakīrti, *Madhyamakavatara* 6, lines 171-226

Optional Primary Commentaries:

Candrakīrti - *Lucid Exposition*, Chapter 13

Tsongkhapa - *Ocean of Reasoning*, Chapter 15

First Essay Due, Friday 4/12 at 11:59pm

Class 9, Monday, 4/15: Two Truths, Revisited: Kant's Transcendental Idealism

Main Readings:

Kant, *Prolegomena*, Preface pp. 5-14.

Kant, short excerpt from the preface to the Second Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 143-146.

Class 10, Wednesday, 4/17: Kant's Transcendental Idealism, Continued

Main Reading:

Kant, *Prolegomena* "How is pure natural science possible?"
§14-30 pp. 46-65.

Class 11, Monday, 4/22: Vasubandu's Cittamātra

Main Reading:

Excerpts from the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra*
Vasubandu, *Treatise on the Three Natures*

Class 12, Wednesday, 4/24: Vasubandu's Cittamātra, Continued

Reading: TBD

Class 13, Monday, 4/29: The Two Truths in Plato

Main Reading:

Plato - *Sophist*, short excerpt
Plato - *Republic*, end of book 6, beginning of book 7

Class 14, Wednesday 5/1: The Divine in Aristotle

Main Reading:

Aristotle - Excerpts from *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, and *Ethics*

Class 15, Monday 5/6: Plotinus's Monism

Main Reading:

Plotinus - *Enneads* 6.5

Class 16, Wednesday, 5/9: Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta

Main Readings:

Upanishads, excerpts
Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, excerpts

Class 17, Monday 5/15: Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedanta, Continued

Main Readings:

Śaṅkara, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, excerpts

Class 18, Wednesday 5/17: The One or the None?

Main Readings: No reading, just a conversation with Swami Sarvapriyananda

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLi_ugqA00Y

Final Essay (or Final Two Short Essays) Due, Friday 5/24 at 11:59pm