

HUMA 11600/7: Philosophical Perspectives II

Time and Place: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:50, Cobb 403

Instructor: Ryan Simonelli

Email: simonelli@uchicago.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00-5:00 or by appointment in Rosenwald 216. Link for sign up sheet [here](#) (if you're looking at this digitally) and on the Canvas site.

Writing Specialist: Sophia Sherry

Email: sisherry@uchicago.edu

1 Course Overview

How is it possible for us to have knowledge of the world and of others with whom we seem to inhabit it? From Descartes' doubt of everything with the lone exception of his own self, Hume's questioning of even that, radical doubts about our knowledge of the world animate the modern era of philosophy in the 17 and 18 centuries. In this class, we will consider these skeptical questions, as they arise in the work of Descartes and Hume, as well as in Shakespeare's *Othello*. We will also briefly look at issues of Cartesian in the information age, with fake news and deep fakes, we'll compare Hume's denial of self to the Buddhist theory of no-self, and we'll conclude with a brief consideration of Kant's famous responses to Humean and Cartesian skepticism.

2 Course Requirements and Expectations

Papers: There will be three 5-6 page papers, each one being worth 20% of the total grade. These are slightly longer than the papers last quarter, and my expectations will be slightly higher, since you've all had the practice last quarter of writing philosophy papers.

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.

Group Presentation: There will be one group presentation on replies to Descartes's *Meditations*, worth 10% of the total grade. Each group of 4-5 students will read one a 10 minute presentation picking *two to three* of the objection/reply pairs and explaining them, followed by a 5 minute Q&A session with the class. Sign ups will be posted a week prior to the presentation.

Participation: Participation is worth 30% of the total grade. This comes in three forms, each worth 10% of your total grade. First, for *one of the two* classes each week you are expected to submit a discussion post—either a question initiating a discussion or a follow-up to a posted question—prior to 8am that class day. These can be very simple questions or thoughts, and you don't need to spend a lot of time constructing them. 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 page. The second 10% is participation in class discussions. A significant portion of each class will be dedicated to class discussion. Your grade for engagement in these discussions is based not just on how often you speak but also, and to no less of an extent, how well you listen to your fellow classmates when they speak. 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.

Finally, 10% of your participation grade is participation in writing seminars, explained below.

Writing Seminars: Writing is the main medium of philosophy, and a principle aim of this course is to bring you to the point where you are able to do philosophy yourself in this medium, critically reconstructing and evaluating philosophical arguments in writing. The assignments are geared towards this end and, to aid you in achieving it, there is a dedicated writing specialist, Sophia Sherry, who will help you learn the ropes of academic and specifically philosophical writing. Sophia will hold writing seminars throughout the quarter in which you'll receive instruction on how to write philosophy essays and have the chance to workshop your essays with Sophia and your classmates.

Readings: The three books that you need to purchase for the course are the following:

- Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy (with Selections from the Objections and Replies)*, Second Edition. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Edited by John Cottingham. Cambridge University Press.

- Shakespeare. *Othello*. Revised Edition. Edited by E.A.J. Honingmann. The Arden Shakespeare.
- Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Second Edition. Edited by Eric Steinberg. Hackett.

It is important that you get these specific editions of these texts. They are all available at the Seminary Co-op bookstore, and it's recommended that you get them there if you can. All other readings will all be posted on the Canvas site under the "Files" section. The other book that you might want to purchase but don't need to is the following:

- Kant. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Revised Edition. Edited by Gary Hatfield. Cambridge University Press

You can get this one off amazon if you want a hardcopy, but I'll also post the excerpts from this on the Canvas site.

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

Class Schedule

Class 1, Tuesday 1/3: Introduction

No Assigned Reading

Class 2, Thursday 1/5: Descartes' *Meditations*

Reading: Descartes, “Dedicatory Letter,” “Synopsis,” and “First Meditation”

Class 3, Tuesday 1/10: Descartes’ *Meditations*

Reading: Descartes, “Second Meditation”

Class 4, Thursday 1/12: Descartes’ *Meditations*

Reading: Descartes, “Third Meditation”

Class 5, Tuesday 1/17: Descartes’ *Meditations*

Reading: Descartes, “Sixth Meditation”

Class 6, Thursday 1/19: Group Presentations on Objections and Replies

Readings : Descartes, “Objections and Replies,” *Meditations* 1, 2, 3, and 6

Only required to read the set of objections/replies you signed up for—the others are optional.

Class 7, Tuesday 1/24: Cartesian Skepticism in the Information Age: Fake News and Deep Fakes

Readings:

Hounshell et al. – “A Journey Into the Misinformation Fever Swamps”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/26/us/politics/misinformation-social-media.html>

Rini – “Deepfakes Are Coming: We Can No Longer Believe What We See.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/10/opinion/deepfake-pelosi-video.html>

Cote – “Fake News and Deepfakes Pose a Growing Threat to Democracy, Experts Warn.

<https://news.northeastern.edu/2022/04/01/deepfakes-fake-news-threat-democracy/>

Class 8, Thursday 1/26: *Othello*

Reading: Shakespear, *Othello* , acts 1 and 2

Alternately, Watch the Play (and follow along):

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B08VWZX4VT>

First Essay Due Friday, 1/27 at 11:59pm

Class 9, Tuesday, 1/31: Othello, Continued

Reading: Shakespear, *Othello*, acts 3, 4, and 5

Class 10, Thursday 2/2: Othello, Skepticism, and Gender

Reading: Scheman, "Othello's Doubt/Desdemona's Death: the Engendering of Skepticism"

Class 11, Tuesday, 2/7: Hume, Enquiry

Reading: Hume, *Enquiry* §I-III

Class 12, Thursday, 2/9: Hume's, Enquiry

Readings: Hume, *Enquiry* §IV

Class 13, Tuesday, 2/14: Hume's, Enquiry

Reading: Hume, *Enquiry* §V, §XII Part 1

Class 14, Thursday, 2/16: Hume's, Enquiry

Reading: Hume, *Enquiry* §VII

Second Essay Due Friday 2/17 at 11:59pm

Class 15, Tuesday, 2/21: Hume and Buddhist Philosophy

Reading: Hume, excerpt from *Treatise on Human Understanding* "Personal Identity"

Garfield, "Candrakīrti and Hume on the Self and the Person."

Class 16, Thursday, 2/23: Kant

Reading: Kant *Prolegamena*, Preface pp. 5-14, short excerpt from the preface to the Second Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 143-146

Class 17, Tuesday, 2/28: Kant

Reading: Kant, *Prolegamena* "How is pure natural science possible?" §14-30 pp. 46-65 (can skip §24-26).

Class 18, Thursday, 3/2: Wrap Up

Reading: Taylor and Dreyfus, *Retrieving Realism*, Chapter One

Final Essay Due Friday, 3/10 at 11:59pm