

**Faculty of Arts  
Department of Philosophy**

**PHL 201 Problems of Philosophy  
Mondays 10 – 11am  
Thursdays 2 – 4pm**

Instructor: Boris Hennig  
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### **Calendar Description**

This course serves as an introduction to philosophy by focusing on problems and issues which have occupied thinkers down through the centuries. For example, how can we relate talk about the cause and effect relationship governing physical events with talk about people making free choices? How do mind and body relate? What do we really know about the physical world or other people's minds? Can we know whether God exists? Are moral judgements objectively true or false?

### **Course Details**

We will look at a small sample of philosophical problems, such as: Is there infallible knowledge? What is time? Is it always wrong to act against one's own moral convictions? What is justice? In most cases, we will spend one week on one problem, and we will read one old and one new exposition of it.

A course website (Blackboard) is accessible via <http://my.ryerson.ca>.

All reading material will be provided on Blackboard.

### **Evaluation**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- Blackboard Discussion, roughly one item per week: 20 % in total.
- Essay Draft, ca. 400 words, due February 22nd: 10%.
- Essay (based on the draft), ca. 2000 words, due March 15th: 40%.
- Exposition of a Philosophical Problem, ca. 500 words, due any time before April 1st: 30 %.

You will be required to participate in the Discussion Board on Blackboard. Each week (except weeks 01 and 07), a new discussion forum will be opened. Write one or two sentences on the topic of this forum. What you write should make obvious that you attended class. Each forum will remain open for one week (7 days). After a forum is closed, no submissions can be made.

In the Exposition of a Problem, you should explain one of the philosophical problems discussed (Negation, Argument from Illusion, Causality, Time, etc.). Explain what is interesting and difficult about it; if possible, say something about how it might be solved. You may write and submit the exposition any time before April 1st. I strongly encourage early submissions.

Essays may be about any philosophical topic of your choice, but they must make use of at least one of the readings and they must be related to what we discussed in class. They will be written in two stages. The draft versions are due by the end of study week. I will grade this version and provide comments on how to improve. The final version should be based on the draft version; it is due March 15th.

All written assignments should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs, 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins. They will be evaluated with respect to content, grammar, and style. All assignments will be checked for plagiarism (see Student Code of Academic Conduct below). MS Word and Adobe pdf format are acceptable, all other formats should be converted to pdf.

Late assignments will be penalized by subtracting 10% off the grade per day (including weekends and holidays). Extensions will only be given in very exceptional circumstances and must be agreed upon at least 72 hours before the deadline. E-mailed requests will not normally be accepted; please meet me in person.

### **Missed Classes and/or Evaluations**

Students are required to inform their instructors of any situation which arises during the semester which may have an adverse effect upon their academic performance, and must request any considerations and accommodations according to the relevant policies and well in advance. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals.

- *Medical certificates* – If a student misses the deadline for submitting an assignment, or the date of an exam or other evaluation component because of illness, he or she must submit a Ryerson Student Medical Certificate AND an Academic Consideration form within 3 working days of the missed date. Both documents are available at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf). If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit your forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit your forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School. If you need clarification, speak to your professor.
- *Religious observance* – If a student needs accommodation because of religious observance, he or she must submit a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious,

Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance AND an Academic Consideration form within the first 2 weeks of the class or, for a final examination, within 2 weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first 2 weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Both documents are available at <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit the forms to your own program department or school. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit the forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School. If you need clarification, speak to your professor.

- *Students with disabilities* – In order to facilitate the academic success and access of students with disabilities, they should register with the Access Centre <http://www.ryerson.ca/student services/accesscentre/index.html>. Before the first graded work is due, students should also inform their instructor through an “Accommodation Form for Professors” that they are registered with the Access Centre and what accommodations are required.

### **Student Code of Academic Conduct**

The Ryerson Student Code of Academic Conduct ([www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf)) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found to be guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at [www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity).

Academic misconduct includes:

- plagiarism (the claiming of words, ideas, artistry, drawings or data of another person, which includes submitting your own work in whole or in part for credit in two or more courses),
- cheating,
- misrepresentation of personal identity or performance,
- submission of false information,
- contributing to academic misconduct,
- damaging, tampering, or interfering with the scholarly environment,
- unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted material,
- violations of departmental policies on professional behavior and/or course requirements.

All papers will be checked for plagiarism. One of the means for doing this will be [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com). This is a plagiarism prevention and detection service to which Ryerson subscribes. It is a tool to assist faculty members in determining the similarity between student work and the work of other students who have submitted papers to the site (at any university), internet sources, and a wide range of journals and other publications. While it does not contain all possible sources, it gives faculty some assurance that students' work is

their own. No decisions are made by the service; it simply generates an “originality report”. Faculty must evaluate that report to determine if something is plagiarized.

Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.

I will be very strict on plagiarism. If there is a suspicion of academic misconduct, I will first speak to the student. If the suspicion persists, we will have a facilitated discussion with the Academic Integrity Office. If I decide that a student plagiarized, the minimum penalty will be an F in the assignment and a disciplinary note on the student’s academic record, which will be deleted upon graduation. Repeated plagiarism will have more severe consequences.

### **Important Resources Available at Ryerson**

Student Learning Support – or SLS – offers a range of support programming designed to help students develop the skills necessary for academic success and participate fully in their academic programs. All of our programs are free, and open to undergraduate, graduate and continuing education students at Ryerson. We offer the following academic support:

- Academic Accommodation Support ([accessfrontdesk@ryerson.ca](mailto:accessfrontdesk@ryerson.ca))
- English Language Support
- Graduate Student Support
- Math Support
- Study Skills and Transition Support
- Writing Support
- Test Centre ([testcentre@ryerson.ca](mailto:testcentre@ryerson.ca))

Internet: [www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport](http://www.ryerson.ca/studentlearningsupport), e-mail: [sls@ryerson.ca](mailto:sls@ryerson.ca).

**Tentative Schedule**

#	Date	Topic	Reading (on Blackboard)
01	1/12 1/15	Intro / What is a philosophical problem?	
02	1/19 1/22	Negation	Freud, <i>Negation</i> (4 p.) Frege, <i>Negation</i> (19 p.)
03	1/26 1/29	Argument from Illusion	Descartes, <i>First Meditation</i> (4 p.) Ayer, <i>Argument From Illusion</i> (57 p.)
04	2/2 2/5	Causality	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §IV (12 p.) Anscombe, <i>Causality and Determination</i> (15 p.)
05	2/9 2/12	Time	St. Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> XI (21 p.) McTaggart, <i>Unreality of Time</i> (18 p.)
	2/16 – 2/22: Study Week		
	<b>2/22</b>	<b>Essay Draft due</b>	
06	2/23 2/26	Evil	Ps.-Dionysius, <i>Divine Names</i> IV (26 p.)
07	3/2 3/5	Evil (cont.)	Arendt, <i>Thinking and Moral Considerations</i> (30 p.)
08	3/9 3/12	Moral Responsibility	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> III 1-5 (17 p.) Frankfurt, <i>Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility</i> (11 p.)
	<b>3/15</b>	<b>Essay Final Version due</b>	
09	3/16 3/19	Erring Conscience	St. Paul, <i>Letter to Romans</i> 14 (1 p.) Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> I-II 19,5-6 (4 p.)
10	3/23 3/26	Enlightenment	Kant, <i>What is Enlightenment?</i> (7 p.) Foucault, <i>What is Enlightenment?</i> (19 p.)
11	3/30 4/2	Ethical Relativism	Midgley, <i>On Trying Out One's New Sword</i> (6 p.) Wiredu, <i>Are There Cultural Universals?</i> (13 p.)
	<b>4/1</b>	<b>Problem Exposition due</b>	
12	4/6 4/9	Abortion (TOPIC CHANGED)	Anscombe, <i>Dignity of the Human Being</i> (7 p.) Thomson, <i>Defense of Abortion</i> (20 p.)