

PHILOSOPHY 232: PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY
FALL 2015

Professor Eric Swanson
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30–11:30, and by appointment.

Many important debates involve such profound disagreements that it's hard to know who we should believe. What should we do when we're faced with such a debate? When we learn that people's views are different from ours, should our own views change? If so, in what ways? Might we have wrong views that we can't change, no matter how hard we try? Can two people disagree about so much that it's impossible for one to understand the other's position? Could some truths be literally unbelievable? What does it even mean to say that something is true, or to say that something is true for you but not true for me?

We will discuss all these questions in this course, focusing on how they arise when we think about freedom, morality, justice, science, prejudice, consciousness, and ideology. Reading, thinking, talking, and writing about these philosophical issues is exciting and important work. But the skills you will develop by doing that work are valuable outside of philosophy as well, helping you think and write more clearly, ask more insightful questions, and become more creative at solving problems.

TEXTS

Thinking It Through: An Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy, by Kwame Anthony Appiah

Blade Runner: The Final Cut, directed by Ridley Scott (available on YouTube for \$2.99)

The Conversation, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (available on YouTube for \$2.99)

The House I Live In, directed by Eugene Jarecki (available on YouTube for \$1.99)

Rashomon, directed by Akira Kurosawa (available on Amazon for \$2.99)

Run Lola Run, directed by Tom Tykwer (available on Amazon for \$9.99)

Other texts will be available on Canvas (<https://umich.instructure.com/courses/21715>)

COURSE WEB SITE

On Canvas, at <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/21715>

LECTURE

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:10–10:00, in Auditorium D, Angell Hall

SECTIONS

003, Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:10–1:00, 2407 Mason Hall: Jesse Holloway

004, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:10–11:00, 2407 Mason Hall: Caroline Perry

005, Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:10–2:00, 2347 Mason Hall: Jesse Holloway

006, Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:10–4:00, 2011 Modern Languages Building: Caroline Perry

GRADING

- 15%: One short (two to three page) paper, due 10/3
- 20%: One in-class mid-term exam, on 10/29
- 15%: One short (two to three page) paper, due 11/21
- 30%: One final paper (five pages), due 12/21
- 10%: Your section grade, including participation in section, surprise quizzes if necessary, etc.
- 10%: Responses to the *upcoming* reading (or viewing), graded pass / fail. (For example, your 9/13 reading response would be on *Blade Runner*.) These don't have to be long—one paragraph is fine. But for a pass, your response has to make it *clear* that you did the reading and thought about it. These are due 9/13, 9/20, 9/27, 10/11, 10/20, 11/1, 11/8, 11/15, 11/29, and 12/6—not in weeks when there is another assignment or exam. Late responses will not be accepted, since your GSIs and I will use these responses to help us prepare for lecture and sections.

EXPECTATIONS

Keep up with the readings. They demand close attention and careful thought, and we'll always be integrating different topics in philosophy. If you fall behind you'll miss much of what's going on for the rest of the semester.

We'll be discussing many controversial issues in this course, and challenging our beliefs throughout. Be polite, respectful, and charitable in discussion with your classmates and teachers.

Read carefully University of Michigan's policy on academic integrity, available at:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity>

We encourage you to discuss the material with your classmates, but all work you turn in must be your own. Cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment and disciplinary action by the University.

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; ssd.umich.edu) typically recommends accommodation through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Use of laptops in class can distract the user, other students, and teachers. Lots of research has shown that many students learn better if they take notes by hand. See, for example:

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

However, some students absolutely have to use laptops, and do benefit from them. If you need to use a laptop in lecture, please sit to the left (as you face the front of the room). If laptops distract you, please sit in the center or on the right. No phone calls, texting, etc. in class.

Missed exams can be made up only with ample appropriate documentation—for medical reasons, a signed and dated doctor's note; for the death of a loved one, a signed and dated letter from a funeral home; etc. We will be more flexible with late papers, but you must contact your GSI in advance to ask for an extension, and you must stand by your agreement with your GSI.

So you can all pay attention to all of lecture, I will finish by 9:58 sharp, leaving at least two extra minutes to pack up your things. But please don't start to pack up your things before 9:58!

SCHEDULE

Tuesday 9/8	Organizational meeting
Thursday 9/10	Lecture on Appiah, Preface, Introduction, and Chapter 1: Mind
Sunday 9/13	Reading response due
Tuesday 9/15	Lecture on <i>Blade Runner: The Final Cut</i> , directed by Ridley Scott
Thursday 9/17	Lecture on Patricia Churchland, “The Hornswoggle Problem”
Sunday 9/20	Reading response due
Tuesday 9/22	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 2: Knowledge
Thursday 9/24	Lecture on Brie Gertler, “Self-Knowledge” (excerpt)
Sunday 9/27	Reading response due
Tuesday 9/29	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 3: Language (focus on sections 3.1–3.4 and 3.12–3.14)
Thursday 10/1	Lecture on Bronisław Malinowski, excerpts from <i>The Language of Magic and Gardening</i> ; and W. V. O. Quine, “Communication” and “Meaning”
Saturday 10/3	First paper due
Tuesday 10/6	Lecture on <i>The Conversation</i> , directed by Francis Ford Coppola
Thursday 10/8	Lecture on Appiah, Sections 4.1–4.8: Science
Sunday 10/11	Reading response due
Tuesday 10/13	Lecture on Appiah, Sections 4.9–4.14; Thomas Kuhn, <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> (excerpts); and Steve Reich, <i>Come Out</i>
Thursday 10/15	Lecture on Appiah, Sections 5.1–5.5: Morality
Tuesday 10/20	Reading response due. Fall study break—no class.
Thursday 10/22	Lecture on Appiah, Sections 5.6–5.13: Morality (continued)
Tuesday 10/27	Lecture on Sarah McGrath, “Moral Disagreement and Moral Expertise”
Thursday 10/29	Mid-term exam
Sunday 11/1	Reading response due
Tuesday 11/3	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 6: Politics (sections 1 through 8)
Thursday 11/5	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 6: Politics (sections 9 through 17)
Sunday 11/8	Reading response due
Tuesday 11/10	Lecture on Charles Mills, <i>The Racial Contract: Overview</i> ; and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, “Come Out” (from <i>Fase</i>)
Thursday 11/12	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 7: Law
Sunday 11/15	Reading response due
Tuesday 11/17	Lecture on <i>The House I Live In</i> , directed by Eugene Jarecki
Thursday 11/19	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 8: Metaphysics
Saturday 11/21	Second paper due
Tuesday 11/24	Lecture on <i>Rashomon</i> , directed by Akira Kurosawa
Sunday 11/29	Reading response due
Tuesday 12/1	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 9: Philosophy (sections 1 through 9)
Thursday 12/3	Lecture on Sally Haslanger, “But Mom, Crop-Tops Are Cute!”
Sunday 12/6	Reading response due
Tuesday 12/8	Lecture on Appiah, Chapter 9: Philosophy (sections 10 through 13)
Thursday 12/10	Lecture on <i>Run Lola Run</i> , directed by Tom Tykwer
Monday 12/21	Final paper due