

# Philosophy 101

Gregory Salmieri  
Fall 2011

## Course Description

This course introduces students to philosophy by considering three perennial philosophical questions: "Is there a God?", "What is the ultimate basis of knowledge?", and "What is the relationship between being moral and doing what is best for oneself?" We will consider competing positions on each issue defended by historical and contemporary philosophers; and students will be asked to reach (and defend) their own conclusions.

## Course and Instructor Information

Instructor: Gregory Salmieri  
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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 - 1:45 p.m., Murray Hall G201

Required Texts: Most readings will be made available electronically, but there is a required course pack which is available at the bookstore.

## Assignments and Grading

**Reading Assignments:** A tentative schedule of readings is available on the Sakai site (in the calendar and on the home page for the course). It will be updated as necessary throughout the term. I reserve the right to change the readings for any class meeting until an hour after the end of the previous meeting. Any such last minute changes will be announced in class or through emails and/or Sakai announcements, but changes made further in advance may be done without special announcements, so be sure to check the current version of the schedule when preparing for class.

**Ungraded Assignments and Classroom Participation:** There will be several ungraded assignments over the course of the semester: two surveys and two brief papers (of one to two pages each) stating your initial position on issues discussed in the class. Though these assignments will not be graded, points will be deducted from your semester average if you do not complete them. Five points will be deducted for failing to complete either of the initial statements, and two points for failing to complete either of the surveys. Points may be added to your semester average for valuable contributions to classroom discussion.

**Participation on the Blackboard Discussion Board (15%):** Students are expected to participate in the Blackboard discussion board associated with the course. 15% of your semester average will be based on your contributions to the board. Participation on the board will be graded on the degree to which it reflects engagement with the course materials and contributes to the intellectual environment of the class, thus both the quality and the quantity of your posts are relevant. Any student who writes at least fifteen posts, each of at least 150 words and of clear relevance to the course, will receive at least an 80% for this component of the grade. However, it is possible to receive a higher grade with fewer posts, if they are of a higher quality.

**Two Analysis and Assessment Essays (5% and 15%):** There will be two essays in which students will be called upon to analyze and assess arguments in texts. The first of these will be a single-page paper focused on the argument contained in a single paragraph. It will be due on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and your grade for it will make up 5% of your semester average. The second essay will be two to three pages and will deal with the argument(s) in a short paper. It will be due on September 26<sup>th</sup> and your grade for it will make up 15% of your semester average.

**Two Papers (15% and 30%):** In addition to the ungraded papers and the assessment and analysis essays, there will be two graded papers. The first, which should be two to three pages in length, will be due on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and will make up 15% of your semester average. The second paper, which should be four to five pages in length will be due on December 8<sup>th</sup>, and will make up 30% of your semester average.

**Final Exam (20%):** There will be a final exam, administered on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm, which will make up 20% of your semester average.

**Course Schedule** (readings in grey are optional)

- 8/23 Class 1: Introductions
- Course Syllabus
- 8/24 Initial Survey due by 11:55pm
- 8/25 Class 2: The nature and value of philosophy
- Rand, “Philosophy: Who Needs It?”
  - Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
- 8/26 Initial Statement on the Existence of God due by 11:55pm
- 8/30 Class 3: Analyzing and Assessing Arguments; Positions on the Existence of God
- Salmieri, “[Analyzing and Assessing Arguments](#)”, §1-3,§5
  - Scriven, “God,” §3-4 (pp. 94-107)
- 9/1 Class 4: The Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God
- Aquinas, “The Five Ways”
  - Earle, “The Cosmological Argument”\*
  - Salmieri, “[Analyzing and Assessing Arguments](#),” §4.1-3
  - Anonymous, “The First-Cause Argument”
  - Scriven, “God”, §6.1-1A, §6.1-1B (pp. 112-126)\*
- 9/4 First Analysis and Assessment Essay due by 11:55pm
- 9/6 Class 5: Inferences to the Best Explanation and the Teleological Argument
- Paley, excerpt from *Natural Theology*, Chapters I, III, and V-VI
  - Earle, “The Teleological Argument”\*
  - Salmieri, “[Analyzing and Assessing Arguments](#),” §4.4-5
  - Rachels & Rachels, “2.2 The Argument from Design,” pp. 14-16 (“Hume’s Objections”)\*
  - Scriven, “God,” 6.1-1C (pp.126-30)\*
  - Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part 11
- 9/7 Class 6: Evolution vs. Creation as Explanations for Teleological Structures in Living Things
- Rachels & Rachels, “2.3 Evolution and Intelligent Design”\*
  - Darwin, selections from *On The Origins of the Species* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition): pp. 2-5, 404, 410-421, 429
  - Darwin, “Religious Belief” (from The Autobiography of Charles Darwin, pp. 85-96)
  - Talcott, “The Fine-Tuning Argument: A Closer Examination”
  - Anonymous, “The Argument from Design” and “Can Evolution Explain our Origins”
- 9/13 Class 7: Ontological Arguments for the Existence of God and the Argument from Miracles
- Salmieri, “[Analyzing and Assessing Arguments](#)”, §4.6
  - Anselm, *Proslogium*, Chapter III
  - Gaunilo, “In Behalf of the Fool”
  - Earle: “The Ontological Argument”\*
  - Anselm, “Apologetic to Gaunilo’s Answer on Behalf of the Fool”
  - Scriven, “God”, 6.1-3 (pp.141-148)\*
  - Anonymous, “The Ontological Argument”
- 9/14 Viewing of Julia Sweeney, Letting Go of God
- 9/15 Class 8: Atheism (and other issues raised by Sweeney’s monologue)
- Sweeney, *Letting Go of God*
  - *Genesis*, 1-2 (The account of creation)
  - *Genesis*, 19 (The story of Lot)
  - *Genesis*, 22:1-17 (The binding of Isaac)
  - *Judges*, 11:29-40 (Jephthah’s sacrifice)
  - Numbers, 25, 31 (The seduction of the Israelites by Midianite women, and Moses’ destruction of the Midianites)
  - Mark 11:12-14 (Jesus “curses” the fig tree)
- 9/20 Class 9: Descartes on the Need for Method and Cartesian Doubt
- Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, parts 1-2 and 4
- 9/22 Class 10: Cartesian Doubt Reconsidered and the Implications of Fallibility

- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 1
  - Peikoff, “Maybe You’re Wrong”
- 9/26 Second Analysis and Assessment Essay due by 11:55pm
- 9/27 Class 11: The Rationalist Approach to Knowledge
- Salmieri, “Three Approaches to Knowledge,” §1-§2
- 10/8 Class 12: The Empiricist Approach to Knowledge
- Miller and Jensen, “The Way of Experience” from the heading “Modern Empiricism” (on the bottom of p.81) through the end of the document.
- 10/4 Class 13: The Aristotelian Approach to Knowledge
- Aristotle, [\*Metaphysics A.1\*](#)
- 10/5 Survey on the Arguments for the Existence of God due by 11:55pm
- 10/6 Class 14: Pascal's Wager and Moral Status of Belief without Evidence
- Pascal, “The Wager”
  - Locke, “Of Enthusiasm”
  - Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
  - Locke, “Of Our Knowledge of the Existence of a God”
- 10/10 Initial Statement on Morality and Happiness due by 11:55pm
- 10/11 Class 15: James' Pragmatist Defense of Religious Belief
- James, “The Will To Believe”
- 10/12 Class 16: Plantinga's Anti-Evidentialist Defense of Belief in God
- Plantinga, “Is Belief in God Properly Basic?”
- 10/18 Class 17: The Greeks and the Idea of an Ultimate End
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.1-2, 4-5, 7 (part 1) [pp. 1-4 of the PDF]
  - Plato, “Socrates’ Argument for Hedonism” (from the *Protagoras*)
  - Plato, excerpts from the *Philebus*
- 10/23 First Paper due by 11:55pm
- 10/25 Class 18: Aristotle's Ethics
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7, I.13, II, X.6-8
  - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.
- 10/27 Class 19: Aristotle and Pride and Self-love □
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.4, 5, IX.8
- 11/1 Class 20: Epicurus' Hedonistic Ethics (and Mill's)
- Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus
  - Mill, Utilitarianism, excerpts from Chapter 2 (through p. 3)
  - Nozick, “The Experience Machine”
  - Ross, “A Criticism of Mill’s Distinction between Qualities of Pleasure”
- 11/3 Class 21: Biblical Ethics
- *Genesis*, 22:1-17 (The binding of Isaac)
  - *Exodus*, 20:1-20 (The Ten Commandments)
  - *The Gospel According to Matthew* 4:23-7:29 (the Sermon on the Mount), 19:16-30 (Jesus’ teachings on wealth)
  - *John’s First Epistle*, 2:15-17
  - *Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3:5-23, 12-13
  - Dershowitz, “Nothing American about the Ten Commandments”
  - Mohler, “The Secular Hatred of the Ten Commandments”
- 11/8 Class 22: Hobbes' Contractarian Ethics
- Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*
- 11/10 Class 23: Mill's Utilitarian Ethics
- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections from Chapters 2 and 4 (pp. 5-11)
  - Criticisms of Mill’s Proof (pp. 12-13)
  - Moore, “Egoism is Self-Contradictory” (p. 13)

- 11/15 Class 24: Criticisms of Utilitarianism
- Strom, “An Organ Donor’s Generosity Raises the Question of How Much is Too Much
  - Thompson, excerpt from “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem”
- 11/17 Class 25: Rand’s Ethics of Rational Self-Interest
- Rand, selections from *The Virtue of Selfishness*
- 11/22 Class 26: Kant’s Deontological Ethics
- Kant, selections from *Grounding the Metaphysics of Morals*
- 11/29 Class 27: Kant’s Ethics (continued)
- Kant, selections from *Grounding the Metaphysics of Morals*
- 21/1 Class 28: Kant on Knowledge, Its Limits, and The Propriety of Belief in God
- Kant, preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 22-32 (as marked)
  - Kant, preface to *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, pp. 1-6
- 12/6 Class 29: Church on the Existence of Santa Claus (an Exercise in Philosophical Detection)
- Church, “Is there a Santa Claus?”
- 12/8 Final Paper due by 11:55pm
- 12/15 Final Exam at 12:00pm

### The Honor Code

All faculty and students at UNC are bound by the University’s [honor code](#), and any suspected [violations](#) of the code by students will be dealt with in accordance with the [Instrument of Student Judicial Justice](#). Such violations include, but are not limited to, [plagiarism](#) in papers and cheating on exams. Additional policies concerning plagiarism and the proper citation of sources are discussed below.

### Policies and Advice Concerning the Use and Citation of Unassigned of Materials

You are, of course, welcome and encouraged to read any materials that interest you concerning the topics discussed in the class, and I would be happy to recommend further readings to anyone interested in doing so. However, it should not be necessary to do any such research in order to prepare to write your papers for the course. All the writing assignments have been designed so that they can be completed consulting only the materials assigned in the course itself. In fact, I find that when students prepare for the papers by doing additional research, the quality of their work suffers as often as it benefits. I will discuss the causes of this shortly, but first it is necessary to announce and explain my policy concerning the citation of sources.

*Any use that you make in writing a paper of any unassigned materials must be documented in that paper.* First, any material paraphrased or quoted from any unassigned materials must be clearly identified as such, and citations must be given. This includes information gleaned from reference sources that you might take to be “common knowledge” – for example, definitions of terms, summaries of books, dates of important events, etc. There is no need to provide citations for such pieces of information if they were presented in class or if you just happen to know them; but if, while writing or researching the paper, you needed to consult a dictionary, encyclopedia, web page, etc., or any notes you might have taken on such a source, then there needs to be a citation. Second, references must be given for any works that you consult in the process of researching and writing the paper, even if you do not make direct use of any material from the works. (As to the format of the citations, any format will do, so long as it includes the information necessary to identify the source.)

This policy is for your own protection. Most importantly, it minimizes the possibility of accidental plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else’s words or ideas as one’s own. When it is deliberate or the result of recklessness, it is a very serious offence, and being found guilty of it can carry [grave repercussions](#). Of course there are plenty of legitimate ways in which you can make use of sources; and, in most contexts, it is not necessary to cite every piece of information that one acquires from reference works. However, in my experience students are often poor judges of when citations are necessary; and, by requiring you to document every use of any unassigned source, I can ensure that such failures of judgment do not lead to accidental plagiarism. The policy also makes it easy to dispel any suspicions of plagiarism that may arise. It is often easy to tell that a student was consulting an unassigned source while writing his paper; and, though there are ways of doing this that do not constitute plagiarism, questions of plagiarism are inevitably raised. By documenting your uses of sources, you make it easy for me to assure myself that your use of them was appropriate, and you eliminate any suspicion of an intent to deceive.

Failures to abide by the above policy may impact your grade on a paper, even if the resulting paper does not violate the honor code. In extreme cases, a submitted paper may be rejected entirely for such reasons.

Having said all of this, I want to stress that the papers assigned for this class *are not research papers*. I expect that most papers will contain no citations to unassigned materials because, in most cases, it won't be necessary to make any use of them.

I mentioned earlier my observation that doing additional research often leads to weaker rather than stronger papers. I think the main reason for this is that it can divert time from the activities that are most necessary for excelling in the class--namely, studying and reflecting on the assigned materials. Another reason is that philosophical reading is inherently difficult, especially when one is first approaching it. I have selected the readings that I think provide the easiest introduction to the ideas we will be discussing. Students who look for additional sources because they are having trouble understanding the assigned material, often find that the additional reading only adds to their confusion. Moreover, many of the sources students are most likely to consult (*Wikipedia*, for example) contain a significant amount of misinformation. So, if you are having trouble understanding the readings, please discuss it with me, before striking out on your own. By contrast, I encourage those of you who feel comfortable with your comprehension of the assigned readings to read further, if you are interested in doing so. Do take care, however, not to present as original to you any ideas or arguments that you may learn in the course of this reading. (If you know that you read something somewhere, but do not remember where, it is acceptable to say as much.)