

Issues in Metaphysics and Epistemology

COURSE OUTLINE

Objectives Welcome to a discussion of the meaning of life, philosophy-café style. This seminar-format course will develop your ability to reason philosophically, starting with the theme of physical existence. What are bodies, and why do we have them? For example, does it make a difference whether we play hockey on ice, or on a Wii system, or on an NHL videogame? Are our bodies the key to our identities? Is plastic surgery okay, or should you live with the chin you were born with? Who knows best whether you are in pain from that surgery – you, or the doctor who did it? If surgery removes some bone from your chin, is that piece your “property” to decide what to do with? If you die after surgery, does it make a difference whether your body is buried or cremated? As we explore these questions in search of answers that make the best sense, we discover how answers are interlinked. By the end of the course, you will see how philosophical beliefs shape the ways we treat our bodies and our actions in general.

Note: this course does not assume you have a background in philosophy. If you have not taken a philosophy course before, you will discover how to do philosophical thinking, questioning, and writing. If you have already taken any philosophy courses, you will have a chance to explore in more depth some questions that interest you in this area and develop your reasoning ability.

Text: There is no required text for this course.

Assigned readings: Four assigned readings will be provided in class

Suggested readings: additional readings will be made available on reserve.

Assignments: All assignments can be adapted to suit individual needs and goals. You are welcome to explore metaphysical or epistemological questions that interest you but are not directly raised in the course.

Participation (preparation of 10 questions for class)	10%
Short essay # 1, due February 12	30%
Short essay # 2, due March 12	30%
Final paper or project (= “exam”) (date as specified on exam schedule)	30%

Grading and expectations. A+ 87% and over. A 84-86%. A- 80-83%. B+ 77-79%. B 74-76%. B- 70-73%. C+ 67-69%. C 64-66%. C- 60-64%. P given only in exceptional circumstances.

I expect you to be responsible and realistic in balancing your obligations. If you can’t attend class or hand a paper in on time, please contact me promptly - preferably in advance - and find a solution that will work for us both. If you take the responsibility to stay in touch, I will do everything I can to make the course work for you.

Office hours and contact: Office: D3091. Office hours will be announced in class. I am also available by phone or e-mail. Phone numbers and e-mail address will be provided in class.

