

# Knowledge, Reality and Values

## CORC 1210

Instructor: Yoonhee Kang  
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Meeting time: MW11:00 AM-12:15PM  
Office hours: W 2:30-3:30 (3316 Boylan)  
or by appointment

Semester: Spring 2013  
Classroom: 3411 B  
Code: 0107  
Credits: 3.0

### Course description

This course is designed to introduce some of issues relating to the philosophical areas of metaphysics (theories of reality), epistemology (theories of knowledge), and ethics (theories of value).

We will read several historical and contemporary philosophical writings and will try to answer the following questions: Does God exist? What is the nature of human existence? Do we have free will? Is it possible for computers to think? What is the relation between the mind and the body? What are the criteria of knowledge? What is the basis of moral judgments?

Through critically analyzing various arguments regarding those topics, this course will help you improve your ability to read, write and think critically. You will be able to examine the given arguments' strengths and weaknesses by identifying and evaluating the main argument, constructing objections, and finding possible responses to those objections; you will be highly encouraged and advised to develop your philosophical ideas.

### Required Text

Readings will be available on our course website.

*\*\*You are responsible for viewing the class web site on a very regular basis.*

### Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be determined in the following ways:

1. Attendance and Participation – 15%
2. Exams – 45%
  - 1) Midterm – 20% (Wednesday, 3/20)
  - 2) Final – 25% (Friday, 5/24)
3. Two Short Writing Assignments – 40%
  - 1) First – 20% (due on Wednesday, 3/13)
  - 2) Second – 20% (due on Wednesday, 5/8)

Each requirement will be graded numerically, ranging 0 to 30. Numerical grades correspond to letter grades as follows:

A+: 30    A: 28-29    A-: 26-27  
B+: 24-25    B: 22-23    B-: 20-21  
C+: 18-19    C: 16-17    C-: 14-15  
D+: 12-13    D: 10-11    D-: 8-9  
F: 0-7        \*No Curb

## 1. Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required. You are not allowed to be late. You should sign the attendance roll each class. The roll will be taken at the **beginning** of the class. You will be allowed a maximum of **two** unexcused absences, but after which every missed class will result in one point deduction from your numerical attendance grade. Regular participation is also important. As this is a philosophy class, a great deal of our time will be interactive. Your frequent contribution to class discussions will receive a perfect participation score.

There will be 4-5 in-class writing activities and/or take-home assignments, which will provide you *extra-credits*.

- NB: Excused absences are only for religious holidays, serious health problems, and serious family problems. To receive an excused absence, you need to provide an appropriate document such as a confirmation letter from a health care provider or from the office of the Dean of the college.

## 2. Exams

There will be two in-class exams. They will consist of three or four short essay questions to check your comprehension about the content of the course. Every single question of the exams will be based on the *study questions* distributed during the class.

The final is *not* cumulative. There may be an extra credit question in the final exam.

- NB: You are responsible for making sure that final exams do not conflict in your schedule. The midterm exam is scheduled on **Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>** (regular schedule) and the final is on **Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>** (1:00-3:00PM). *Please check the dates and times of your finals immediately.* No make-up exam will be given unless you have one of the three excuses in above.

### 3. Two Short Writing Assignments

There will be two short essays (800-900 words). The main goal of them is to assess how well you understand the philosophical problems, how clearly you can express the problems, and how persuasively you can develop your own philosophical view.

Each of them is worth 20% of your final grade. The first paper is due on **Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>** and the second due is on **Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup>**. I will post topics on the course website at least two weeks before the due date as well as a guideline.

- NB: You are highly recommended to submit your rough draft at least *one week ahead* of the due date and have my comments to revise your paper. If you receive a grade lower than B-, you can *resubmit* to increase your mark to a maximum of B. In case of late submission, there will be *one point deduction for each day*. Late assignments will be returned graded *without* any comment or feedback. Grades for late ones are *final*; they cannot be resubmitted.

### Course Expectations

- It is important for everyone to allow for an open forum for discussion, so that we are all free to speak our views on any relevant topics without condemnation or hostility.
- You may also bring a laptop or other e-book readers for taking notes or reading electronic papers if you wish. However, it is expected that they will be used in class for course purposes only.
- NO texting, NO cell phones ringing*
- NO smelly food*

### CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College take academic integrity very seriously. There will be no tolerance towards plagiarism and cheating. If you engage in plagiarism or other academic dishonesty, you will fail the course and will be reported.

\*Please read the university's policy on academic integrity:

[http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/abo\\_initiatives/110901\\_AcademicIntegrity.pdf](http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/abo_initiatives/110901_AcademicIntegrity.pdf)

### CUNY Policy on Disability Services

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect that they may have a disability are invited to set up

an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form. We will discuss your specific accommodation.

## **Topics and Readings**

### **Topic1. Classical Arguments about God's existence**

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q.2  
John Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"

### **Topic2. Freewill**

Taylor, "Freedom & Determinism"

### **Topic3. Our Knowledge of the External World**

Rene Descartes, *Meditations I and II*

### **Topic4. The Mind-body Problem**

Rene Descartes, Selection from, *Meditations II and VI*, and from *Reply to Objection II*  
Thomas Nagel, "The Mind-Body Problem," in *What Does It All Mean?*

### **Topic5. The Problem of Personal Identity**

Dennett, "Where am I," in *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*

### **Topic6. Ethics**

Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, second Section  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch.1-2

## Course Schedule

Week 1	1/28	Course Introduction	
	1/30	What is Argument (Handout)	
Week 2	2/4	Evaluating Argument & Topic 1 : Introduction	
	2/6		Writing practice
Week 3	2/11	Aquinas	
	2/13		
Week 4	2/18 No Class		
	2/20	Mackie	
Week 5	2/25	Mackie (con't)	1 <sup>st</sup> Assignment posted
	2/27	How to write a philosophy paper? Topic 2: Introduction	
Week 6	3/4	Cases against Freedom (Handout) & Taylor	
	3/6	Taylor	
Week 7	3/11	Topic 3: Introduction	
	<b>3/13</b>	Descartes	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Assignment Due</b>
Week 8	3/18	<b>REVIEW</b>	
	<b>3/20</b>	<b>EXAM</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Week 9	3/25	<b>Spring Break</b>	
	3/27		
Week 10	4/1		
	4/3	Descartes (con't)	
Week 11	4/8	Topic 4: Introduction & Descartes	
	4/10		
Week 12	4/15	Nagel	
	4/17		
Week 13	4/22	Topic 5: Introduction & Dennett	2nd Assignment posted
	4/24		
Week 14	4/29	Topic 6: Introduction & Kant	
	5/1		
Week 15	5/6	Kant (con't)	
	5/8	Mill	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment Due</b>
Week 16	5/13	Mill (con't)	
	<b>5/15</b>	<b>REVIEW</b>	
	<b>Friday 5/24</b>	<b>EXAM (1PM - 3 PM)</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>

*\*The reading schedule is subject to change.*