

PHI 107: THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

Spring 2016

Time and Location: Mon/Wed/Fri 9:30—10:25pm, Smith Hall 337

Instructor: **Paul Prescott**

Office Hours: Thu 3:00—5:00pm, 541B Hall of Languages

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REQUIRED TEXTS

- Joel Feinberg & Russ Shafer Landau, *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 16th edition. (Wadsworth, 2016). ISBN: 978-1305502444
- James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, *Problems from Philosophy*, 3rd edition. (McGraw-Hill, 2011). ISBN: 978-0073535890

The required texts are available for purchase at the University Bookstore in the Schine Student Center. Additional readings will be made available for download on Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theories of Knowledge and Reality is an introduction to some of the central problems of philosophy. Topics include the (1) existence of God, (2) the relation of mind and body, (3) the limits of human knowledge, (4) the possibility of free will, and (5) the objectivity of moral values. Alternative theories will be considered on each topic, with an emphasis on evaluating arguments in support of competing positions. Readings will be from both historical and contemporary sources.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be no exams, and no final paper. Course requirements will consist of weekly writing assignments and classroom participation.

Writing Assignments – Writing assignments will consist of weekly reflection papers. The reflection papers will be short: one to two pages, double-spaced. Assigned tasks will vary. Assignments will be given at the end of each week, and will be due at the outset of the week following. Assignments must be submitted in hardcopy. **Late assignments will not be accepted.**

Participation: *Regular reading, preparation and participation are expected.* Students are expected to do the assigned reading prior to class, and to participate in discussion throughout the semester. As there is no final essay, and no exams, a **significant** portion of your final grade will be based on reading and participation.

Grading Information: Students will be graded on the basis of (1) the quality and completion of the weekly reflections, and (2) the quality of participation in the classroom discussions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy will be enforced. The Syracuse policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete University policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Special Accommodations: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue “Accommodation Authorization Letters” to students with documented disabilities as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 20—22	Course Introduction
Jan 25—Feb 12	The Existence of God & Rationality of Religious Belief
Feb 15—Feb 26	The Mind and Its Place in Nature
Feb 29—Mar 11	The Nature and Limits of Human Knowledge
SPRING BREAK	
Mar 21—Apr 8	The Free Will Problem
Apr 11—Apr 29	The Objectivity of Moral Values
May 2	Course Conclusion