Special Topics: Self East and West  
21:730:385:01  
Fall 2010

Class location: Conklin 342  
Meeting time: Mondays 2:30-3:50, Wednesdays 1:00-2:20  
Instructor: Professor Katalin Balog  
Office: Philosophy Department, Conklin Hall, Room 410  
Office phone: 973-353-1397  
Office hours: Mondays 12-1 and by appointment.  
email: kbalog@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Blackboard: once you registered for the class you can go to Blackboard and select the course “Special Topics Philosophy, 730:385.” The page will contain course-related information, viz., syllabus, powerpoint slides, announcements, and the readings which are not included in the books assigned for the course. You need to have access to Blackboard to participate in the course.

Course description:

This course is an investigation into how we should, and how we do conceive of ourselves as persons. The first investigation fundamentally depends on who we really are while the second explores who we think we are.

We’ll engage the first question mostly by trying to answer what makes someone the same person as time goes by. Does personal identity consist in the continuity of memories, beliefs and psychological traits? Is it a matter of the continuity of the body (or brain)? Or the persistence of an immaterial soul? We are also going to explore the bodily self and altered states of consciousness, as well as the question of what matters in survival and whether immortality would be a good thing.

By way of trying to answer the second, we will explore interesting connections between ancient Buddhist views on the self and modern Western philosophical and psychological accounts of the self. These traditions share the idea that our ordinary conceptions of the self are in some crucial respect misguided. We will focus on Buddhism’s central claim that these misconceptions about the self lie at the heart of suffering and that correcting them is essential for psychological well-being. As the Buddhist teachings on the self is as much experiential as theoretical, we will have meditation instruction from a senior Buddhist teacher as well as individual interviews on meditation practice. This will happen somewhere half-way through the semester. Keeping a meditation practice is recommended for the rest of the semester.

Required texts:

Ray Martin & John Barresi, Personal Identity (PI)  
Mark Siderits, Buddhism as philosophy (BP)  
These are all available in the campus bookstore as of now.  
Additional articles are posted on Blackboard.
Some helpful philosophy links to find out more about terms and topics discussed in class:

- The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (you need to be logged into the Rutgers Library system)
- Jim Pryor’s philosophical terms and methods
  - http://www.askphilosophers.org/

There is an ongoing series of short philosophical pieces on the New York Times philosophy blog The Stone. I highly recommend you reading them all: they are simple, engaging and fun.

What you can expect from the course: One of the main goals of this class is to give you a sense of the philosophical problems involving the self: what is it to be a person, what makes a person continuous over time, what is the bodily self, why does it matter how we think about the self, etc. However, because one of the most important features distinguishing philosophy from other academic disciplines is that it is a skill and not just a body of knowledge, we have another, more general goal in this class: to build up your ability to think critically and deeply, and to internalize this skill so that you can apply it to any subject matter whatsoever. One of the reasons that philosophy majors do considerably better on the LSAT’s than all other majors except physics is that they are taught to think constructively and critically irrespective of the subject matter. Doing philosophy is a skill that transfers well to other disciplines, and one of our aims is to help you to cultivate it. You will also get a rudimentary training in contemplative studies in this class; that is, what it means to study your own mind with patience and skill.

Tentative schedule of readings (Please notice that this schedule is tentative and so subject to change as the semester unfolds. Coming to class and checking Blackboard on a regular basis will keep you informed of the changes):

Week 1 Sept. 1 Introduction (Look over syllabus; get acquainted)

Segment 1: PERSONAL IDENTITY THROUGH TIME, NATURE OF SELF - ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Week 2: Sept 8 (Wednesday will count as Monday) The memory theory (readings for this week are to be found on Blackboard (BB))

John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity", Ch. XXVII of Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 1694.

Week 3: The critics of the memory theory (all readings on BB)

Sept 15: Thomas Reid, "Of Identity", Chapter 4 from the third essay in Reid’s *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 1785.


**Week 4: Abandonment of personal identity; bodily and psychological accounts.**

Sept 20: David Hume, "Our Idea of Identity", part of “of Skepticism With Regard to The Senses,”, which is section 2 of part IV of Book I of Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739 (BB)

David Hume, "Of Personal Identity", section 6 of part IV of Book I of the *Treatise*. (BB)

David Hume, "Second Thoughts", part of the appendix to Book III of the *Treatise*, 1740. (BB)

First in-class quiz: Sept. 22

**Week 5: Reductionism**

Sept 27: Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" (PI).

Sept 29: Class canceled

**Week 6: Reductionism and Anti-reductionism**

Oct 4: Williams continued


**Week 7: What matters in survival**

Oct 11: Derek Parfit, “The unimportance of identity” (PI)

Oct. 13: Second in-class quiz

**Week 8: Reductionism continued**

Oct 18: Parfit continued

Oct 20: Parfit continued

**Week 9: Antireductionism; immortality**

Oct. 27: Bernard Williams and review session


Segment II: Self, awareness, meditation and Buddhism

Week 10: Consciousness and self-consciousness

Nov 1: MIDTERM

Nov 3: Dan Zahavi, “Is the self a social construct?” (Bb)

Week 11: Consciousness and self-consciousness, Buddhist philosophy introduced

Nov 8: Wolfgang Fasching, “Consciousness, self-consciousness, and meditation” (Bb)

Nov 10: Early Buddhist sutras

Ariyapariyesanā Sutta: The Noble Search

Cūlasaccaka Sutta: The Shorter Discourse to Saccaka

Week 12: Buddhism

Nov. 15: Meditation instruction (visit by senior Buddhist teacher Joseph Mauricio)

Nov 17: Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, excerpt from The Myth of Freedom by Chögyam Trungpa (Bb)

Week 13: Buddhist philosophy in analytic mirror: no self introduced

Nov 22: Siderits Ch. 1 and 2 (BP)

Nov 24: Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14: Buddhist philosophy continued

Nov 29: Siderits, Ch. 3 (BP)

Dec 1: Siderits, Ch. 4 (BP)
**Week 15: The importance of the self**

**December 6<sup>th</sup>: third in-class quiz**

Dec 6: Prep and quiz

Dec 8: Miri Albahari (Bb)

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>: draft of final paper due

**Week 16: Conclusion**

Dec 13 Wrap-up and interview

Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>: revised final paper due

**FINAL EXAM: Dec. 20, 3-6pm, Conklin 342.**

**Weekly powerpoint lecture notes** will be placed on BB shortly after each class designed to help you understand and think about the course material you are reading.

**Preparing for class:** Expect to do on average about twenty pages of reading for each class. Be forewarned that reading philosophy, even when the reading assignment is short, is difficult. Often the author assigned will be developing a sophisticated and subtle line of reasoning that you will miss unless you give it your full attention. Therefore it is a good idea to read each article or chapter at least twice, and to write down your questions for discussion while reading the assignments, during lecture, or an office hour. You should spend a minimum of 5 hours preparing for the course every week. You should be prepared in each class to raise questions about the readings assigned for the day. I will call on people occasionally to help facilitate a discussion about the readings but also to make sure you have done the readings ahead of time.

**Some Ground Rules for the Course:**

1) Please come to each lecture and discussion section with the reading assigned for that date already completed. Be prepared to ask questions about the material. I will take attendance in each class. Unexcused absence from more than 3 classes will result in having the grade lowered by a half grade.

2) Do not read newspapers, magazines, books, etc., either in hard copy or in wireless form, in class.

3) No food or drink (unless you do it so unobtrusively that I don’t notice).

4) Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class.
5) Your oral participation is strongly encouraged. You will likely disagree with a variety of views and concerns expressed in the class; please be respectful. Class discussion will be more fun and also more instructional if everybody feels safe to present their points of view.

**Required course-work:**

1) 3 in-class quizzes.
2) a midterm examination (**W, October 27**);
3) a final examination (**Date TBA**).
4) students who want an A grade in the class will also need to write a short (5-8 page) paper on one of the topics I will distribute ahead of time. A draft of the paper will be due by **Dec. 6th**, a revised version on **Dec. 20th**.
5) class attendance.

**Midterm Exam:** *No Make-up Midterm is given*. The only accepted reasons for missing the midterm exam are: (1) illness documented by a doctor’s note; (2) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time the assignment is due; (3) family crisis with proper documentation provided.

**In-Class Quizzes:** *No Make-up Quizzes are given*. The only accepted reasons for missing a quiz are: (1) illness documented by a doctor’s note; (2) a university sponsored activity taking place at the time the assignment is due; (3) family crisis with proper documentation provided.

**Grading:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>30% (10% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Your quizzes and exams and paper will be assigned points out of 50, which will translate into letter grades as follows:

- 50-46 = A (50 is a full A; 46 is a A-/B+)
- 45-40 = B (45 is a B+ and 40 is a B-/C+)
- 39-34 = C (39 is a C+ and 34 is a C-/D+)
- 33-28 = D (33 is a D+ and 28 is a D-)
- 27 or below = F

**Paper:** you are not required to write a paper but if you do, it can in general raise the grade you would be getting by half grade point. So, for example, if your grade would be a B+ or an A based on your quizzes, midterm and final, but your revised paper merits an A then your grade will be an A.
Class participation will also affect your final grade: if you are on the borderline, your grade will be pushed up by good class participation and pushed down by poor class participation.

Here are two highly recommended links that

a) help you with your class preparation: 
Jim Pryor’s guide to reading philosophy
b) guide you in the process of writing a philosophy paper:
Jim Pryor’s guide to writing philosophy

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic work. Intentionally committing plagiarism is a serious offense with severe consequences. Instructors are required to report students who intentionally violate this policy to the department chairperson and to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The most common forms of plagiarism are:

- Quoting directly or paraphrasing without acknowledging the source (this includes copying or paraphrasing material from a web site without providing a proper citation for the site)
- Presenting the work of another as one’s own
- Plagiarizing major portions of a written assignment
- Submitting purchased materials such as term papers

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy establishes levels of violations and recommends sanctions. Depending upon the severity of the case and the level of the violation, the sanctions for these violations include: a failing grade for the assignment, failure in the course, mandatory participation in a series of noncredit academic integrity workshops, academic probation, and/or suspension.

(If you are in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism or are concerned that you are misappropriating someones words or ideas, speak immediately with your instructor. For more information, you can also consult the University Code of Student Conduct or the Student Judicial Affairs website http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu.)

Special situations:

If you have a special situation concerning learning needs that either requires accommodation, or that you would simply like me to know about, please contact me as soon as possible. I will make every effort to aid you.

Rutgers abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and the accessibility of
online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, the designated office on campus to provide services and administer exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services is located in the Robeson Student Center. I look forward to talking with you soon to learn how I may be helpful in supporting your academic success in this course.

For more information on disability services at Rutgers, go to [http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/](http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/).