

COURSE INFORMATION AND SYLLABUS

“Personal Identity and Ethics”

PHIL 6931, Fall 2015

Instructor: Dave Shoemaker
Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 3:30-6:00 p.m.
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00-1:55; Thursdays, 1:00-1:55; 3:20-4:45; or by appointment
Office: 113 Newcomb Hall
Office Phone: 862-3390 (you can leave a message on my voicemail)
e-mail: dshoemak@tulane.edu (I check it all the time)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*
- David DeGrazia, *Human Identity and Bioethics*
- Marya Schechtman, *Staying Alive*
- Several articles made available on Blackboard

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will develop core philosophical skills of critical analysis and acquire familiarity with an appropriate cross-section of historically significant thinkers and philosophical problems. Students will pursue two or more in-depth studies of a particular, significant philosophical author or authors and/or a specific area of philosophical problems.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

For All Enrolled Students:

1. Attendance: No official policy. I trust that those who are enrolled in the course will attend each week, but I formally request that everyone be in attendance on the presentation day at the end of the semester.
2. Discussion Questions: My plan for each class is to lead discussion on the structure and content of the authors' arguments, along with any problems or problematic implications, a conversation interspersed throughout with your discussion questions (when relevant and sufficiently interesting). In order to facilitate such discussion, then, you must turn in at least one well-thought-out question about at least one of the readings assigned each week. If there are multiple readings assigned for the week, it would be great if you could craft a question that incorporates them all, although this isn't required. What I'm trying to glean from these is twofold: (a) an indication that you've read and thought about the assigned material; and (b) a question I can actually use in class for us to discuss. Thus, while questions of clarification are obviously essential for your understanding, just raise those during class. Instead, the discussion questions should be more along the lines of critical evaluation, focusing on problematic possibilities in the reading that will bring to light fruitful avenues of exploration into both the text and the general themes of the course.

So that I have time to process them and incorporate them into my notes for the day, they will be due by e-mail no later than **9:00 a.m. every Tuesday morning** on the days we are scheduled to meet. (For those of you who absolutely cannot meet this deadline, we can negotiate a different due date.) I will grade these in a fairly simplistic way, assigning them “checks,” “check-pluses,” “check-minuses,” or “zeros.” (I will reserve “check-pluses” for the questions that blow me away with their brilliance.) At the end of the semester, if you've averaged “checks” across the eleven discussion questions, you'll get an A for this portion of the course. They're worth **20%** of your overall course grade (so these may be a way to bump you up to an A in the course, even if you have a B on your other assignments).

3. Discussion will obviously be essential in this course. Please come to each meeting prepared to talk about the issues, but also be mindful of when you might be talking *too* much. Let's make sure to spread the discussion wealth around—try not to dominate, but also try not to remain too quiet.

For All Enrolled Undergraduates:

1. Exams: There will be two take-home long essay exams. Each will be worth **40%** of your overall course grade. If you would like to exchange this requirement for the graduate student first option below, discuss it with me.

For Graduate Students:

1. Paper: You are required to write a paper on some aspect of the course, due by 12/8, with a maximum of 4000 words (so that you may submit it to conferences that have that cap). Please clear your topic with me beforehand. I strongly recommend that you submit a draft to me well in advance of the due date. The paper will count for **80%** of your overall course grade. If you would like to exchange this requirement for the undergraduate requirement above, discuss it with me.

This course may count for your metaphysics requirement if your paper is more heavily “metaphysicsy”; it may count for your ethics requirement if it is more heavily “ethicsy.”

SYLLABUS

Date: Readings and Topics

8/25 Introduction to the Issues

Parfit and the Structure of the Debate

9/1 Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, pp. 199-228: The nature of reductionism and non-reductionism; Q-memories

9/8 Parfit, *R&P*, pp. 229-266; 281-289: The Spectra; My Division; What Matters in Survival
Recommended: Bernard Williams, “The Self and the Future” (*on Blackboard*)

9/15 Parfit, *R&P*, pp. 298-329: Successive Selves; Rationality; Applied Ethics.

9/22 Parfit, *R&P*, pp. 329-347: PI & Utilitarianism; David O. Brink, “Self-Love and Altruism” (*on Blackboard*)

Objections and Alternatives to Parfit

9/29 David DeGrazia, Chapter 2: “Numerical Identity and Essence”;
Eric Olson, “Why We Need Not Accept the Psychological Approach” (*on Blackboard*)

10/6 DeGrazia, pp. 77-89 only: “Narrative Identity”;
Mark Johnston, “Human Concerns without Superlative Selves” (*on Blackboard*)

10/13 Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality” (*on Blackboard*); Christine Korsgaard, “Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: a Kantian Reply to Parfit” (*on Blackboard*)

10/20 **EXAM 1 DUE**

Identity and Human Concerns

10/27 Schechtman, Chapters 1-2

11/3 Schechtman, Chapters 3 and 5 (you may skip 4)

11/10 Schechtman, Chapter 6

11/13: **SPECIAL Q&A SESSION WITH MARYA SCHECHTMAN, TBD (Makes up for 11/24)**

Identity and Bioethics

11/17 DeGrazia, Chapter 5; Allen Buchanan, “Advance Directives and the Personal Identity Problem” (*on Blackboard*)

No Class 11/24—Made up on 11/13

12/1 DeGrazia, Chapter 7 (you may skip pp. 254-268)
Recommended: David Shoemaker, “The Insignificance of Identity for Bioethics” (on Blackboard)

EXAM 2: Due 12/8 (Graduate Student Papers due on this date as well)