

PHILOSOPHY 158: PHILOSOPHY AND NARRATIVE

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:10–11:30, in 3463 Mason Hall

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office hours: Tuesdays 4–6, and by appointment.

FOCUS OF THE COURSE

In this class we will use work in contemporary analytic philosophy to help us explore the philosophical questions raised by several works of short fiction. You will gain an appreciation of the richness and difficulty of philosophical problems while also learning about ways in which we can make progress on such problems. We will read fiction by Jane Austen, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, Herman Melville, Leo Tolstoy, and Richard Wright. Alongside their work we will also read a wide range of analytic philosophers writing on freedom, determinism, responsibility, morality, personal identity, mortality, and knowledge of other minds.

GRADING

The distribution of credit is as follows:

- Attendance and active, engaged in-class participation: 20%
- Three in-class exams (9/18, 10/18, and 11/13): 20% each
- One five page paper, due over email *and* CTools dropbox at 6 pm on December 18: 20%

About a week before each exam, I will distribute four essay questions to you. The exam will have exactly three of those four questions on it. On the exam you will answer exactly two of those three questions. (Thus you can easily prepare for enough of the questions on the exam.) You won't be able to bring notes to the exam; you'll have to internalize the important points of your argument so that you can reproduce them persuasively on the exam. Bring your own blue books for the exams.

The paper must be typed, double-spaced, in a legible font, and it must be submitted as a .pdf file. Please email the .pdf file to me and also post it to your CTools dropbox. This way if one doesn't work, there's a backup.

I encourage you to discuss the material with your classmates, but all work you turn in must be your own: see <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity> .

Any student who may need an accommodation for any sort of disability should talk with me during office hours as soon as possible.

COURSE WEB SITE

<http://ctools.umich.edu>

REQUIRED BOOKS

ISBN: 0195390369. *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. Edited by John Perry, Michael Bratman, John Martin Fischer. Publisher: Oxford University Press. 5th edition (2010). (Abbreviated ‘PBF’ in the schedule.)

ISBN: 9780679734529. *Notes from Underground*. By Fyodor Dostoevsky; translated and annotated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf.

ISBN: 9780393976410. *Melville’s Short Novels*. Selected and edited by Dan McCall. Publisher: Norton.

ISBN: 0060976810. *Eight Men: Stories*. By Richard Wright. Publisher: Harper Perennial.

ISBN: 0307388867. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories*. By Leo Tolstoy; translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Publisher: Vintage Books.

ISBN: 9780393967975. *The Metamorphosis*. By Franz Kafka. Translated and edited by Stanley Corngold. Publisher: Norton.

ISBN: 9780393960181. *Persuasion*. By Jane Austen. Publisher: Norton.

SCHEDULE

9/4	☞ Introduction
9/6	Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility” (PBF 457–460) John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism” (PBF 460–476) J. David Velleman, “A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics” (PBF 521–537)
9/11	☞ Death of Ivan Ilyich Leo Tolstoy, <i>The Death of Ivan Ilyich</i> Susan Wolf, “The Meanings of Lives” (PBF 794–805)
9/13	Frances Myrna Kamm, “Rescuing Ivan Ilych: How We Live and How We Die” (on CTools)
9/18	☞ In-class exam
9/20	A special guest (!): Professor Sarah Moss Bernard Williams, “Utilitarianism and Integrity” (PBF 487–495) Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints” (PBF 755–767)
9/25	Thomas Nagel, “The Absurd” (PBF 768–774) Thomas Nagel, “Death” (PBF 806–810)
9/27	☞ Persuasion Jane Austen, <i>Persuasion</i> , chapters 1–12
10/2	Jane Austen, <i>Persuasion</i> , chapters 13–24
10/4	Aristotle, excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (PBF 557–572)
10/9	Margaret Watkins Tate, “Resources for Solitude: Proper Self-Sufficiency in Jane Austen” (on CTools)
10/11	David Gauthier, “Morality and Advantage” (PBF 706–714) J. L. Mackie, “The Law of the Jungle: Moral Alternatives and Principles of Evolution” (PBF 714–719)
10/16	No class: Fall Study Break
10/18	☞ In-class exam
10/23	☞ Bartleby the Scrivener Herman Melville, <i>Bartleby the Scrivener</i> Bertrand Russell, “The Argument from Analogy for Other Minds” (PBF 248–250)

10/25	René Descartes, excerpts from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (PBF 136–160) Anita Avramides, “Skepticism about Knowledge of Other Minds” (on CTools)
10/30	Gilbert Ryle, “Descartes’s Myth” (PBF 251–258) Daniel Dennett, “Intentional Systems” (PBF 267–279)
11/1	☞ <i>The Metamorphosis</i> Franz Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i>
11/6	Bernard Williams, “The Self and the Future” (PBF 347–357) Derek Parfit, “Personal Identity” (PBF 357–370)
11/8	J. David Velleman, “So It Goes” (PBF 371–382)
11/13	☞ In-class exam
11/15	☞ <i>Notes from Underground</i> Fyodor Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from Underground</i> , Part I (pp. 3–41) Peter van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will” (PBF 400–411)
11/20	Fyodor Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from Underground</i> , Part II (pp. 42–130)
11/22	Thanksgiving
11/27	David Hume, “Of Liberty and Necessity” (PBF 412–422) Harry G. Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (PBF 423–429)
11/29	☞ <i>The Man Who Lived Underground</i> Richard Wright, <i>The Man Who Lived Underground</i> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Racisms” (PBF 634–644)
12/4	John Rawls, excerpt from <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (PBF 578–591) Robert Nozick, “Justice and Entitlement” (PBF 591–599)
12/6	John Perry, “Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God” (PBF 96–119)
12/11	Catching up (if necessary) and discussing the final paper
12/18	☞ Final paper due over email and CTools dropbox at 6 pm