Introduction to Philosophy
Philosophy 1A, Spring 2010
Tuesdays and Fridays, 12:10pm-1:30pm

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Office Hours: TBD

Teaching Assistants: TBD

Course Description
This course will offer a problem-based introduction to philosophy. We will consider the following philosophical questions: What can we know about the world external to our senses? What can we know about the thoughts and feelings of others? What is the relationship between our minds and our brains? What makes certain sounds and inscriptions meaningful, while most other sounds and inscriptions are not? Can we have free will in a causally determined world governed by natural laws? What makes an action right or wrong? What does justice require of us? What is the evil of death? What is the meaning of life? The course aims to motivate these questions and introduce students to the methods of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Readings
The main texts for the course are What Does It All Mean? by Thomas Nagel and Introduction to Philosophy, edited by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer. Some additional readings will be available through LATTE.

Requirements
- First Paper (3-4 pages) 25%
- Second Paper (3-4 pages) 25%
- Take Home Midterm 15%
- Take Home Final 25%
- Participation 10%

Course attendance is required. To pass the course, students must complete all written assignments. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day. Students must request extensions by e-mail in advance of the due date of the assignment.

Participation is essential to learning philosophy. Contribution in class and in the online discussion forum on LATTE will be considered. Attendance and in-class exercises are included in the participation grade.

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of Student Development and Conduct with a recommendation that the student fail the course. Students are responsible to inform themselves about what constitutes dishonesty. If in doubt, please ask me! Information can be found here: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/rr/html/rr_section4.html
Schedule of Readings and Assignments
Each part will start with a discussion of the corresponding chapter from Nagel.

1. Introduction (1/19)

2. Skepticism (1/22, 1/26, 1/29, 2/2)
   René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First Meditation (Perry, 171-173)
   Hilary Putnam. “Brains in a Vat.” (LATTE)

3. Other Minds (2/5)

4. The Mind-Body Problem (2/9, 2/12)
   Thomas Nagel. “What is it like to be a bat?” (Perry, 354-362)

   2/12 First Paper Due

5. Meaning (2/23, 2/26)
   H. Paul Grice. “Meaning.” (LATTE)
   H. Paul Grice. “Logic and Conversation.” (LATTE)

   2/26 – 3/5 Take Home Midterm

6. Free Will (3/2, 3/5)
   Peter Strawson. “Freedom and Resentment.” (LATTE)

7. Right and Wrong (3/9, 3/12, 3/16, 3/19)
   John Stuart Mill. “Utilitarianism” (Perry, 492-501)
   Peter Singer. “Famine, Affluence, and Morality.” (Perry, 527-534)


   3/26 Second Paper Due

9. Death (4/13, 4/16, 4/20)
   Palle Yourgrau. “The Dead.” (LATTE)

    Albert Camus. “The Myth of Sisyphus.” (Perry, 43-44)

   Conclusion and Review (5/4)

   5/4 – 5/10, 9am Take Home Final