

PHIL 128: THE METAPHYSICS OF PERSONS

Philosophy 128

Fall 2011

M/W 2:45 p.m.; KRV 167

Professor Amy Kind

KRV 282; x73782

amy.kind@cmc.edu

<http://www.cmc.edu/pages/faculty/AKind/>

Office Hours:

M/W 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates how we should conceive of ourselves as persons. What is a person, and what is it that makes someone the same person over time? Is there such a thing as the self, and if so, can it be conceived of as a unified entity? We will also explore the relationship between the metaphysical nature of persons and various important moral, legal, medical, and psychological issues.

***Note: This course has a prerequisite of one previous college-level course in philosophy or my consent. If you have not had a previous college-level course in philosophy and you have not already talked to me, then please come talk to me immediately. Also, CMC students should be aware that this class does not count for GE credit in philosophy.*

COURSE TEXTS

There are three required books for this class, available at Huntley Bookstore: *Personal Identity* (ed. John Perry); *The Constitution of Selves* (Marya Schechtman); and *The Human Animal* (Eric Olson). Additional readings will be posted to our Sakai course website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Two Papers (30% each)

You will have to write two philosophical papers, each approximately 2500 words in length. These papers will be on assigned topics distributed in class. Any papers suspected of violating the College's policy on academic integrity will be forwarded to the Academic Standards Committee for review. Should you have any questions about how the policy applies to philosophical writing, please come talk to me. The first paper will be due to Sakai by Monday, Oct. 31 at 2 a.m.; the second paper will be due to Sakai by Friday, Dec. 16 at 2 p.m.

Short Writing Assignments (30% total)

Throughout the semester, you will have to submit six short essays (approximately 600 words each) analyzing the philosophical issues raised by an assigned reading in advance of our in-class discussion of it. There will be seven of these assignments, so you can miss one without penalty. (If you submit all seven, I will drop your lowest one.) All essays must be submitted on Sakai by 2 a.m. on the day they are due. See Course Schedule below for due dates.

Extra Credit Opportunity

During the semester, you can take advantage of an opportunity to earn extra credit by writing an analysis (approximately four pages) of a piece of fiction or film that takes up an issue related to our course of study. Books/films must be approved by me in advance. The extra credit assignment may sub in for one missed short assignment. Alternatively, a satisfactory analysis will raise the grade of one of your papers by 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to a B). In *extremely rare* cases, if your analysis is truly exceptional, I will raise your paper grade by 2/3 of a grade (e.g., from a B- to a B+). If you wish to take advantage of the extra credit opportunity, come talk to me during office hours to make the arrangements. Extra credit analyses may be submitted at any time during the semester, but no later than Friday, December 9. *No student may do more than one extra credit analysis.*

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Attendance in class is required. We will be starting promptly at 2:45 p.m., and I expect you to be punctual. Barring exceptional circumstances, you should not be absent from class more than two times over the course of the semester. However, it is not enough merely to attend; you must also come to class having read and thought carefully about the assigned readings so that you are prepared to take an active part in our discussions. In general, you should be consistently and thoughtfully participating in our class discussions. By “thoughtful” I mean to remind you that it is *quality*, and not mere quantity, that matters when it comes to class participation. On occasion, I may ask for student volunteers to start our discussion, and this is also a factor related to class participation. If you are shy and find it difficult to contribute to our class discussions, please come talk to me in office hours

**Should you need special accommodations due to disability for anything relating to our class, please see CMC’s policy at <http://www.cmc.edu/dos/DSS/disabilitysupport.php> and also feel free to come talk to me.

CELL PHONES/LAPTOP POLICY

Please silence your cell phone during class and keep it stored away. If you are texting during class, I will ask you to leave. You are permitted to use your laptops in class to access course

readings and/or for note-taking purposes. If I find that students are using laptops for other purposes, I will ban them in class. Violations of the cell phone/laptop policy will negatively impact your course participation grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings should be completed by the class period indicated. Readings marked (PI) are in the Perry *Personal* Identity anthology. Readings marked (S) are available online at our Sakai course website. Please always bring the relevant course text/s with you to class. All movies to be watched are available for rent on Amazon or iTunes and/or for streaming at Netflix. It is important to watch the assigned movie even if you've already seen it in the past.

Wed., Aug. 31 Introduction to the Course

Unit One: What is a person?

Fri., Sept. 2 Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood" (S)

Mon., Sept. 5 NO CLASS. Watch *Star Trek: TNG* "The Measure of a Man" (Season 2, episode 8; available for streaming on Netflix)

Wed., Sept. 7 NO CLASS. Watch Ridley Scott, dir., *Blade Runner* (preferably the Director's Cut).
**Also recommended: Watch James Cameron, dir., *Avatar*

Mon., Sept. 12 Frankfurt, "Freedom and the Will and the Concept of a Person" (S)
****Short writing assignment #1 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.**

Wed., Sept. 14 Patterson and Gordon, "The Case for the Personhood of Gorillas" (S)
Herzing and White, "Dolphins and the Question of Personhood" (S)

Mon., Sept. 19 Wilkes, "Multiple Personality: Miss Beauchamp" (S)
Radden, "Multiplicity through Dissociation" (S)
****Short writing assignment #2 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.**

Unit Two: What makes a person the same person over time?

Wed., Sept. 21 Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" (PI)
Kurzweil, excerpts from *The Singularity is Near* (S)

Mon., Sept. 26	Butler, "Of Personal Identity" (PI) Reid, "Of Identity" (PI) Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Personal Identity" (PI) **Short writing assignment #3 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.
Wed., Sept. 28	Perry, "Personal Identity, Memory, and the Problem of Circularity" (PI)
Mon., Oct. 3	Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation" (S) Brison, excerpts from <i>Aftermath</i> (S) **Short writing assignment #4 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.
Wed., Oct. 5	Parfit, "Personal Identity" (PI) Watch <i>Star Trek: TNG</i> "Second Chances" (Season 6, episode 24; available for streaming on Netflix)
Mon., Oct. 10	Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , Ch. 14 (S)
Wed., Oct. 12	Williams, "The Self and the Future" (PI)
Mon. Oct. 17	FALL BREAK
Wed., Oct. 19	Olson, Ch. 1, Ch. 3
Mon., Oct. 24	Olson, Ch. 4
Wed., Oct. 26	Olson, Ch. 5
Mon., Oct. 31	Olson, Ch. 6 **Paper #1 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.

Unit Three: What makes us the persons that we are?

Wed., Nov. 2	Schechtman, Chs. 1-3
Mon., Nov. 7	Schechtman, Ch. 4-5 Watch David Fincher, dir., <i>Fight Club</i> **Short writing assignment #5 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.
Wed., Nov. 9	Schechtman, Ch. 6
Mon., Nov. 14	Strawson, "Against Narrativity" (S) Vice, "Literature and the Narrative Self" (S) **Short writing assignment #6 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.
Wed., Nov. 16	Elliott, "You Are What You Are Afflicted By" (S) De Grazia, "Enhancement Technologies and Human Identity" (S)

Mon., Nov. 21 Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance" (S)
 Agar, "Cloning and Identity" (S)
 ****Short writing assignment #7 due to Sakai by 2 a.m.**

Wed., Nov. 23 NO CLASS

Mon., Nov. 28 Turkle, from *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (S)

Wed., Nov. 30 Wolfendale, "My Avatar, myself" (S)

Mon., Dec. 5 Overall, "Sex/Gender Transitions and Life-Changing Aspirations" (S)
 Parascandola, "Trans or Me?" (S)

Wed., Dec. 7 Warnke, "Transsexuality and Contextual Identities" (S)

Fri., Dec. 16 ****Paper #2 due to Sakai by 2 p.m.**