PHIL 1000: PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE
SYLLABUS – SUMMER 2015

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Required texts
Additional reading materials on Blackboard (http://fordham.blackboard.com/)

Recommended texts
Williams, Joseph M. Style: Toward Clarity and Grace. (University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Course Objectives and Expectations
This course introduces students to the practice of philosophy – systematic, critical reflection aimed at understanding. It focuses on philosophical accounts of human nature, and is writing and discussion intensive. Exams are essay-style, and students are required to write several formal papers, to keep informal written journals, to rehearse several arguments orally, and to participate in class debates. Students who successfully complete the course should have greater facility understanding, formulating, and evaluating arguments; they should be better able to discuss challenging ideas orally and in writing, and should have a better understanding of philosophical theories of human nature.

Students are expected (i) to familiarize themselves with the Arts and Sciences Policy on Academic Integrity and the severe consequences of violating it (see Fordham University Student Handbook); (ii) to attend each class session (barring extenuating circumstances which must be appropriately documented if a student wishes to complete missed work); (iii) to have read the assigned material; (iv) to be active participants in class discussion; (v) to complete assignments on time; and (vi) to ask their professor for help if they need it. The professor and TAs are expected (i) to familiarize themselves with the Arts and Sciences Policy on Academic Integrity; (ii) to attend each class session (barring extenuating circumstances); (iii) to have read the assigned material; (iv) to be an active participants in class discussion; (v) to grade assignments in a timely fashion; and (vi) to be available to students who need help.

NOTE 1: NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE PERMITTED IN CLASS!
NOTE 2: Your Fordham email account is the source for all official communication regarding the course.

Grades and Assignments: Grades will be determined according to the following percentages:

Argument Rehearsals (20% each): Argument rehearsals are formal writing assignments that rehearse arguments discussed in class or the readings. A rehearsal is not a summary of a theory or argument; it is not a description of a theory or argument; it is not a comparison of what competing theories say; it is not a report of what someone said; it is rather the presentation of an argument (of reasons for thinking something is true or false) written from the perspective of someone who endorses those reasons. The purpose of rehearsals is twofold: (1) to give students practice reciting well-formulated arguments, (2) to teach them how to understand, appreciate, and respect different points of view. Rehearsals are typically due at the class session immediately following the session at which the argument is covered in class. There will be two rehearsals:

1. The modal argument for substance dualism with the second premise defended by the conceivability argument (written only- 2 drafts)
2. The problem of other minds or the problem of interaction against substance dualism (written only- 2 drafts)

Students are allowed to redraft papers after receiving comments from their professor. They will be allowed to submit up to 3 drafts on the first rehearsal (the original, a redraft, and a second redraft), and they will be allowed to submit up to 2 drafts on the remaining rehearsals (the original plus a redraft). Students must submit their redrafts within 5 calendar days of receiving feedback.
Audience: The target audience for all formal writing in the course (rehearsals, papers, and exams) is the ideal reader: a college freshman who is intelligent and well-educated about all subject-matters except the subject-matter students are writing about. Rehearsals and papers are graded in terms of a single criterion: how well students present and evaluate the arguments.

Style: The style of much academic writing is very bad. As students learn to write academic prose, many take on the bad stylistic habits they see modeled in the academic prose they’re learning to read. Joseph M. Williams, author of a recommended book on style, explains: “[A]s a novice in a field reads its professional prose, he will predictably try to imitate those features of style that seem most prominently to bespeak membership, professional authority. And in complex professional prose, no feature of style is more typical than clumps of Latinate abstraction... What we should find astonishing is not that so many young writers write badly, but that any of them writes well” (Style, 13). Williams’ book on style is highly recommended for this course because it diagnoses many of the stylistic maladies that afflict academic writing, and teaches students how to avoid them.

Planning, Writing, and Revising: Students should read TIPS on Philosophical Reading & Writing and the Rehearsal Grading Rubric in advance of writing their rehearsals, and they should use the checklist in the Rehearsal Preparation document to assess their rehearsals before submitting them. When they receive comments back from their professor they should have a printed copy of the Abbreviation Key for Comments ready to hand, and make use of Presenting Your Argument Clearly as needed. It will help them to reread TIPS on Philosophical Reading & Writing several times throughout the semester. (Note that to see comments in the Word document the Tracking section under the Review tab must be set to Final: Show Markup.)

Submitting Rehearsals: Students must use the following guidelines for submitting their rehearsals electronically (if they do not, they will receive an F for the assignment). Rehearsals must be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Both (1) your document and (2) the subject line of your email must be titled in the following way: Last Name- Assignment Name- Draft Number. There are four assignment names: SD, Not-SD, Physicalism, Not-Physicalism. Here are some examples of correctly written document names: Jones- SD- Draft 1, Smith- Not-SD- Draft 3, Rivera- Not-Physicalism- Draft 2.

Debate paper (1 draft) (20%): Debate papers are formal writing assignments (usually 4-6 pages) that expand the idea of argument rehearsals to include objections and responses. Students describe a position or rehearse an argument in favor of a position. They then rehearse an objection to that position or argument, and rehearse a response to that objection. Students choose one of the following topics for their debate papers:

1. Thesis: Classic compatibilism provides a workable solution to the problem of free will and determinism. Rehearse: (i) The classic compatibilist response to the problem of free will and determinism, (ii) the consequence argument against classic compatibilism, and (iii) a response to that argument.
2. Thesis: There is good reason to think animalism is true. Rehearse: (i) The argument for animalism rehearsed in class, (ii) the objection to animalism that appeals to psychological persistence conditions, and (iii) the animalist’s response to that objection.
3. Thesis: Hylomorphism provides a workable solution to the problem of mental causation. Rehearse: (i) The hylomorphic solution to the problem of mental causation, (ii) an objection to it, and (iii) the hylomorphic response to that objection.

Debate papers are due by the last day of class. Papers must be submitted by email in Microsoft Word format. Both the Word document and the subject line of the email must be titled in the following way: Last Name- Debate paper. Example: Smith- Debate Paper.

Journal (20%): Journals are informal writing assignments in which students to describe their encounters with the topics covered in the class – their thoughts, feelings, comments, and questions about the theories and arguments we are covering. They do not follow any specific format. They are graded in terms of both quantity and quality, both how much effort students put into their reflections on the course material, and the quality of that effort. There should be a total of 25 journal entries (roughly one per class session) on material covered in the readings, lectures, or discussions. Students are encouraged to get feedback on their journal at mid-semester to check their progress, and ask for suggested improvements. There must be at least one journal entry that addresses each of the following topics:

1. Is it possible to be morally responsible for an action if it was not done freely? Is free will compatible with determinism? Is free will compatible with indeterminism? What are the arguments against the claims you’ve just made? What do you say in response to them?
2. What are two examples of fallacies you’ve encountered?
3. What do you think of animalism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

4. What do you think of substance dualism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

5. What do you think of Descartes’ project in the Meditations? Do you think he succeeds in finding an indubitable foundation for all knowledge? Why or why not?

6. What are the arguments against substance dualism? What do you think of them? How do you think would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

7. What do you think of constitutionalism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

8. What do you think of nihilism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

9. What do you think of physicalism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

10. What do you think of the psychophysical identity theory? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

11. What do you think of functionalism? What is the argument for it, and what do you think of that argument? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

12. What do you think of epiphenomenalism? What are the arguments for it, and what do you think of those arguments? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

13. What do you think of emergentism? What are the arguments for it, and what do you think of those arguments? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

14. What do you think of hylomorphism? What are the arguments for it, and what do you think of those arguments? What are the arguments against it, and what do you think of them? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

15. How does hylomorphism solve the problem of other minds? How does it solve the problem of mental causation? How does it solve the problem of emergence? What do you think of the hylomorphic solutions to these mind-body problems? How would critics of your view respond to what you’ve said? What do you say in response to them?

16. What do you think of the Platonic picture of the world, and its implications for our understanding of human nature? Do you find it to be a compelling picture? Why or why not?

17. What is the soul view? What is the argument for it, and what are the arguments against it? What do you think of these arguments? What do you think critics would say in response to what you’ve said? How do you respond to them?

18. How can a hylomorphic theory accommodate a notion of human spirituality? Do you think it is possible to reconcile a notion of human spirituality with our best physical science? Why or why not? What do you think critics are likely to say in response to you? What do you say in response to their criticisms?

Final Exam (20%): There is a comprehensive final exam which consists of several essay-questions.
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