

COURSE SYLLABUS
Philosophy 498/Self-Knowledge
Spring 2016
MW 2:30-3:45pm
PAHB 456

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Course Goals and Expectations:

Philosophers have long been puzzled by the fact that we seem to know the contents of our minds -- our sensations, thoughts, beliefs, meanings, intentions, even our emotions -- in a way that appears to be quite different from, and far more secure than, our knowledge of the social or physical external worlds. This has impressed some philosophers enough to conclude that self-knowledge does not depend on any knowledge of these worlds, or even their existence. This course looks at key historical and contemporary attempts to explain or account for this peculiar feature of the mind and its relation to the social and physical external worlds. The aim of the course is to give students a robust sense of the difficulties inherent in coming to a stable, consistent and satisfying understanding of how human beings know their own minds, and about the relation between the subjective perspective on mental content and the casual dependencies of mental content on the external environment. Significant emphasis is placed on the construction and evaluation of arguments for and against positions.

The course will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussion. Class discussion is essential to mastering the material and coming to a deeper understanding of the issues. Students are therefore expected to keep up to date on readings and to come to class prepared to discuss the relevant material.

Prerequisites: One course in philosophy with a grade of C or better

Recommended preparation: One course in philosophy at the 300 level or above, in particular PHIL 380, PHIL 371, PHIL 373.

UMBC Statement of Values for Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty, and they are wrong. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the [UMBC Student Handbook](#), or the [Office of Undergraduate Education](#).

Required Texts (available in the UMBC bookstore):

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

All readings other than Descartes are available on Electronic Reserves through the UMBC library webpage. **Please note specifications of pages to read for some of the articles.** You are welcome to read the entirety of these articles, but because of time constraints we will be focusing on the material on the specified pages.

Electronic Reserves:

To access electronic reserves, go to the UMBC Library web page and click on Electronic Reserves. Select the Philosophy Department, and then click on PHIL498 under my name. To access material, click on it and then type in the following (exactly as written: all lower case, no spaces):

username = phil498sp16

password = summer

If you have difficulties accessing, viewing or printing Electronic Reserves, change your browser and try again.

Written Work:

two in-class exams, questions to be handed out ahead of time

one final paper, 8 pages – due at end of semester (date to be announced)

Grading: the assignment on which you receive the lowest grade will count as 20% towards the final grade; the other two assignments will count 35% each towards the final grade. 10% will be determined by class participation.

Class Guidelines:

- class attendance is required; the final grade will be affected by more than three unexcused absences; notify me by email about missed classes **before** they happen.
- please make every effort to be in class on time; it is disruptive to come in late or to leave in the middle of class
- no eating in class; drinks are permitted
- you are responsible for checking your UMBC email regularly for any course announcements
- permission for make-up exams or late papers **must** be obtained prior to the scheduled dates

Schedule of Readings (approximate dates, subject to change):

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Jan. 25-27: classes canceled due to weather

Feb. 1-3: - Introduction
- Descartes, *Meditations* I (all) and II (16-19)

Feb. 8-10: - Descartes, *Meditations* III (all) and VI (54-56, 61-62)
- Ryle, 'Self-Knowledge', 136-166 (esp. 136-138, 145-153, 160-166)

Feb. 15-17: - Boghossian, 'Content and Self-Knowledge', 151-156
- Armstrong, *Consciousness and Causality*, 105-115, 121-124, 143-146

Feb. 22-24: - Davidson, 'First-Person Authority'
- Davidson, 'Knowing One's Own Mind', 15-17

THE JUSTIFICATION OF FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY

Feb. 29-Mar.2: - **FIRST MIDTERM EXAM**

- Shoemaker, 'On Knowing One's Own Mind'
- Burge, 'Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge', esp. 68-71, 73ff.

Mar. 7-9: - Burge, 'Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge', esp. 68-71, 73ff.
- Bilgrami, 'Self-Knowledge and Resentment', 223-230

Mar. 14-16: **SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 21-23: - Bilgrami, 'Why is Self-Knowledge Different From Other Kinds of Knowledge?'
- Wright, 'Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Mind: Sensation, Privacy, and Intention', 292-299, 310-316

Mar. 28-30: - McDowell, 'Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein', 297-304, 317-321
- Moran, 'Self-Knowledge: Discovery, Resolution, and Undoing'

HOW WE KNOW OUR OWN MINDS

Apr. 4-6: **SECOND MIDTERM EXAM**

- Moran, 'Self-Knowledge: Discovery, Resolution, and Undoing'

Apr. 11-13: - Finkelstein, 'From Transparency to Expressivism'
- Bar-On and Long, 'Avowals and First-Person Privilege'

Apr. 18-20: - Lawlor, 'Knowing Beliefs, Seeking Causes'
- Lawlor, 'Knowing what One Wants'

EXTERNALISM AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Apr. 25-27: - Davidson, 'Knowing One's Own Mind'
- Burge, 'Individualism and Self-Knowledge'

May 2-4: - Burge, 'Individualism and Self-Knowledge'
- Boghossian, 'Content and Self-Knowledge', 164-172

May 9: - Bilgrami, 'Can Externalism be Reconciled with Self-Knowledge?', 233-44, 250-58

FINAL PAPERS DUE DURING FINALS WEEK, DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Grading

Here is how the grading process for the course works:

$$A = 4.0$$

$$A- = 3.66$$

$$B+ = 3.33$$

$$B = 3.0$$

$$B- = 2.66$$

$$C+ = 2.33$$

$$C = 2.0$$

$$C- = 1.66$$

$$D = 1$$

The lowest of the three grades counts for 20% of the final grade, the higher two grades for 40% each.

Since UMBC currently only has final grades of A, B, C, D, and F (i.e. no pluses or minuses), the final grade will be rounded up or down from the average of the three grades depending on where that average falls.

Example One: A-, B-, A

$$B- = 2 \times 2.66 = 5.32$$

$$A- = 4 \times 3.66 = 14.64$$

$$A = 4 \times 4.0 = 16$$

$$\text{total: } 35.9 = 3.59$$

3.59 is closer to A- (3.66) than to B+ (3.33). So the final grade would be A-, and thus rounded up to A.

Example Two: A-, A-, B-

$$B- = 2 \times 2.66 = 5.32$$

$$A- = 4 \times 3.66 = 14.64$$

$$A- = 4 \times 3.66 = 14.64$$

$$\text{total: } 34.6 = 3.46$$

3.46 is closer to B+ (3.33) than to A- (3.66). So the final grade would be B+, and thus rounded down to B.

Example Three: C, A, A

$$C = 2 \times 2.0 = 4$$

$$A = 4 \times 4.0 = 16$$

$$A = 4 \times 4.0 = 16$$

$$\text{total: } 36 = 3.6$$

3.6 is closer to A- (3.66) than to B+ (3.33). So the final grade would be A-, and thus rounded up to A