

TEACHING DOSSIER

David Mokriski

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TEACHING STATEMENT

I've had the opportunity to teach introductory-level courses in critical thinking and introduction to philosophy with large class sizes (240 students; supervising 4 TAs), as well as upper division courses in formal logic (60 students; 1 TA), metaethics (35 students; no TA), and metaphilosophy (35 students; no TA). I've also been a teaching assistant for many more courses, including in ethics, philosophy of mind, and epistemology. In the future, I'd be interested in teaching courses on any of these subjects as well as others, especially metaphysics.

My primary goal when teaching is to make philosophy practical for students, showing them how philosophical thinking is applicable outside the classroom and university environment. While few students will go on to pursue academic philosophy, all students will, at some time or other, face moral dilemmas, participate in the political process, or simply contemplate life's big questions. It's very important to me, therefore, that all my students cultivate the tools to think carefully about these issues and develop their own philosophical outlooks in a critical manner.

There are several strategies I use to keep students engaged and make sure the skills they learn are easily translatable to outside the classroom. Rather than using the same stale arguments one typically finds in critical thinking textbooks (about, for instance, Socrates being mortal), I like to find moral and political arguments made on Twitter or other social media and have students reconstruct and analyze these arguments as an in-class exercise. I have them supply any suppressed premises in a charitable manner, check for validity by identifying the argument's structure, determine whether any informal fallacies were committed, and consider possible support for and challenges to the premises. Anyone who's taught logic or critical thinking is familiar with getting questions from students like, "What's the point of using these symbols?" or "Why are we following these rules?", but I've found that these sorts of exercises, applying logical analysis to real world arguments that students care about, tend to make these questions much less frequent.

In my introduction to philosophy class, I have my students use iClickers to answer questions. This serves a variety of purposes. It keeps students engaged and interested, it gives me a sense of where they stand on philosophical questions, and it allows the students to see how their own opinions compare with those of their peers. (Also, on a more practical note, it provides an easy way to keep track of attendance and participation.) At the beginning and end of each unit, I ask broad questions about the topic such as, "Do we have free will?" or "Is eating meat immoral?" This tells me about their pre-theoretic judgments and whether they're persuaded to change their mind by the end. Throughout each unit, whenever we're analyzing philosophical arguments, I have them select which premise they reject and ask for volunteers to defend their answers to the class. This gives them an opportunity to engage in friendly philosophical debate with their peers and bounce paper ideas off one another.

When teaching, I try to find creative ways to help students see controversial issues from a new perspective. For example, in a political philosophy unit on the ethics of redistributive taxation, I showed an illustration with one person demanding money from another at gunpoint and asked the class whether it was an instance of theft. While most students said yes, I asked them to brainstorm possible circumstances, consistent with the illustration, in which it was *not* theft—

perhaps the second person came into that money illegitimately and the first is just returning it to its rightful owner, or perhaps the second refused to pay the agreed upon amount after the first completed a job for them. I then connected this back to the ethics of taxation: whether an instance of taking by force constitutes theft depends on background assumptions about property rights—namely what *rightfully* belongs to whom. Implicit in the anti-taxation arguments is the assumption that people's property before taxes is really *justly owned* property, and this assumption deserves scrutiny. This allowed students to see the philosophical issue in a new light—what began as a debate over the use of force turned into a debate over distributive justice.

Given my research interests, I like to include at least a little bit of metaphilosophy in every philosophy course that I teach. For my introduction to philosophy course, I wrote an argumentative essay as a supplemental chapter to the textbook I use in which I defend metaphilosophical skepticism, or skepticism about philosophical claims (see the final page of this document for the abstract). The purpose is to introduce intro-level students to metaphilosophical issues, including concerns about philosophical methodology, peer disagreement, mind-dependence, verbal disputes, and relativism. This material serves as the final unit in the course, so that after weeks of discussing typical intro-level material (free will, personal identity, applied ethics, etc.), students can step back and reflect on what we've been doing when doing philosophy. This shows them how philosophy is a very self-aware discipline—we rarely theorize about a topic without also reflecting on our methods, the meaning of our terms, and how the subject matter fits into broader reality.

Lastly, outside the classroom, I like to combine teaching philosophy with political activism. Towards that end, I run a philosophy and politics channel on TikTok (@armchairculturewarrior) where I make short (60-second-long) videos evaluating political arguments and making bite-sized philosophical points. Although one of my goals is political—to get people to think critically about important issues like economic, racial, and reproductive justice—another goal is to promote good philosophical values such as clarity, charitableness, rigor, and intellectual humility. My channel currently has over 1 million views and 8000 subscribers. I hope it inspires many young people to take a serious interest in philosophy, critical thinking, and responsible political activism.

QUANTITATIVE STUDENT EVALUATIONS

*As Instructor of Record**

SCALE: (1) Excellent; (2) Very Good; (3) Good; (4) Fair; (5) Poor

	Overall quality of instructor	Overall quality of course
Phil 139: Meta-ethics – Spring 2021	1.2	1.3
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Summer 2018	1.3	1.4
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Winter 2018	1.4	1.7
Phil 183: Beginning Modern Logic – Summer 2017	1.7	1.8
Phil 183: Beginning Modern Logic – Winter 2017	1.7	2.0
Department average for graduate student instructors	1.7	1.9
Campus average for graduate student instructors	1.6	1.8

As Teaching Assistant

SCALE: (1) Excellent; (2) Very Good; (3) Good; (4) Fair; (5) Poor

	Overall quality of teaching assistant
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Winter 2021	1.2
Phil 1: Intro to Philosophy – Fall 2020	1.35
Phil 4: Intro to Ethics – Spring 2020	1.45
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Fall 2019	1.2
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Spring 2019	1.3
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Winter 2019	1.1
Phil 1: Intro to Philosophy – Fall 2018	1.4
Phil 183: Beginning Modern Logic – Spring 2018	1.13
Phil 4: Intro to Ethics – Fall 2017	1.6
Phil 100A: Ethics – Summer 2016	1.7
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Spring 2016	1.1
Phil 1: Intro to Philosophy – Winter 2016	1.75
Phil 100D: Philosophy of Mind – Fall 2015	1.75
Phil 100B: Theory of Knowledge – Summer 2015	1.45
Phil 3: Critical Thinking – Spring 2015	1.35
Phil 183: Beginning Modern Logic – Winter 2015	1.6
Phil 4: Intro to Ethics – Fall 2014	1.2
Department average for teaching assistants	1.7
Campus average for teaching assistants	1.6

* Evaluations not available for Winter 2020 (Intro to Philosophy) due to COVID-19 disruption

SELECTED STUDENT COMMENTS

“Professor Mokriski is able to take a very complex subject and present it to us in a digestible and understandable manner. The philosophers and topics he covers in the course are very interesting. He exhibits a great deal of patience and is welcoming of student engagement. He ensures that we have the resources and tools that we need to succeed in the course and is available and responsive to us when needed. Professor Mokriski has gone above and beyond as an instructor. His level of intellect and ability to educate us is most impressive. The course materials, lectures, and instruct availability went beyond my expectations and truly aided in my educational experience and success.”

“I really appreciated all of the feedback we got on assignments. They were detailed and constructive, so I knew how to improve or review. I also appreciated the openness in taking and answering questions. No question was made to be bad or wrong, and he always gave concise and insightful answers.”

“Great instructor! Course is very challenging but enjoyable.”

“David was a great prof that made class interesting and relatable. He made me much more interested in Phil, as I originally was only taking it for a GE. Now I am thinking about a Phil minor thanks to David. Overall was a great guy.”

“Very clear presentation of material. His wit kept class pretty interesting.”

“One of the best professors I’ve ever had. Very good lecturing presence and passionate about the material. Kept me interested in something I don’t care much about. Very funny too.”

“Very good instructor. HW assignments are fair and helpful. Focuses on understanding the material rather than memorizing unnecessary information.”

“Truly an amazing professor. It was a pleasure taking this class. He is very knowledgeable on the material and demonstrates it well to students. He is also very kind and helpful when students ask questions. Additionally, his exams are quite fair as well as the material taught in class. I think he does the most that a professor can. Good hire!”

“Overall great instructor, very enthusiastic and kind.”

“Excellent teaching, very methodical.”

“David’s explanations were always very straightforward and concise. He provided real life examples that made learning the material much easier.”

“A great instructor! His explanations and answers to student questions were clear and easily understandable. I greatly appreciated his straightforwardness and clarity about what we were going to learn and how we were going to be tested.”

“Great professor that actually understands what he teaches about and posts all material online and does his best to provide students with whatever they need. He is always here during office hours and explains concepts with various applications of them. He is always timely when he promises to do things for us.”

“Fantastic teacher. Greatly enjoyed lectures and was able to get concepts across without confusion. Fair tests.”

“I don’t really think this class can be improved in any form. The way it is taught is very clear and explicit for all students. I thank you for sharing your knowledge and wisdom with us all. Looking forward to be in other of your classes. ☺”

“Very good teaching. Tough material to teach. Mokriski did a really good job of it and was funny too (mostly). 10/10”

“Professor Mokriski is a very effective and impactful educator. His slides are extremely dense with important information and are organized and easy to follow. I appreciate all of the examples he included because that helped me understand the material in more detail. He also uses a loud and clear voice.”

“Overall, you had really great and informative lectures! You know what you’re talking about and you keep the class interesting.”

“Super good guy! Very helpful with explain concepts to students. Very reliable and interactive. Would love to take another class with David! Thanks for an awesome course! The professor was engaging, and I enjoyed the class mainly because of relevant examples on powerpoints.”

“He is a dedicated instructor and very helpful.”

“David is very clear and concise. He explains the material in ways that are easy to understand and is always willing to help his students.”

“David is ridiculously smart and knowledgeable. If he doesn’t eventually get a tenure track position somewhere, Socrates himself couldn’t.”

“You’re a great lecturer, especially given how difficult the topic is, and I thoroughly enjoyed the course!”

“Good professor. Keeps everything interesting and conveys the core concepts very well.”

“The class was extremely difficult, but the instructor was able to down the complex information well. I was really happy with the patience the instructor approached the class with.”

“He knew what he was talking about and made sure everyone understood before moving on.”

STUDENT LETTERS OF SUPPORT

June 20, 2020

To whom this may concern,

My name is Becky Choi and I am a rising junior at Georgetown University studying International Politics and International Business at the School of Foreign Service. I met David Mokriski two years ago when he was my philosophy instructor at UC Santa Barbara. Although transitioning from high school to college can be challenging, David's dedication to his students' success inspired me to major in philosophy. Throughout the course, David has always been prepared and organized with presentations, class activities, assignments, and test schedule all mapped before the semester begins. His humor and ability to relate class material to personal experience and current events helps maintain students' attention. Furthermore, his willingness to correct any past mistakes in front of the class and slow down to work with students at their own pace is an illustration of his sound character.

Unlike many instructors who distance themselves from students, David would take the time to get to know each of his students. When I struggled in the beginning of his class, he worked on each logic problem with me for two hours until I was confident doing it on my own, illustrating his commitment to helping his students achieve academically. After I expressed interest in majoring in philosophy, David invited me to join his philosophy reading group every week. Although I found philosophy readings to be a bit dense, David's mentorship and discussion enabled me to thrive in philosophy at UCSB. I am thankful to have met David my freshman year and I have no doubt that he will exceed expectations at your institution.

Sincerely,

Becky Choi | International Politics Department
Walsh School of Foreign Service | Georgetown University
[LinkedIn Profile](#) | bkc36@georgetown.edu

STUDENT LETTERS OF SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

To Whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to strongly recommend David Mokriski for the teaching position.

My name is Alexander Ko, a former student of David Mokriski at the University of California, Santa Barbara. I was fortunate enough to learn philosophy from David in both his critical thinking course as well as his undergrad philosophy reading group. David's expertise in breaking down complex concepts such as metaphysics, ethics, and logic into easily understood material makes him an excellent candidate for your department.

During the summer of 2017, I was lucky enough to experience David's passion for teaching as well as philosophy while taking his critical thinking course. David skillfully engaged students with the material through an impressive use of analogies and problem-solving techniques. A week before the final exam, David took extra time out of his schedule to offer extra sessions to better prepare students for the test. In these sessions, he provided more real world examples and allowed students to showcase their own thought processes which allowed for more fruitful collaboration and learning. These sessions both improved students' abilities, improved their logic discourse, as well as increased their interest in the field, exemplified by the impressive number of students in attendance of David's philosophy reading group.

While attending UCSB, I was able to participate in David's philosophy reading group. David facilitated discussion of many different fields in philosophy that were not explored in the classroom, giving students the opportunities to interact with new concepts they may not have been exposed to otherwise. David's thoughtful insight and ability to summarize arguments is a definite must for any philosophy department.

David goes above and beyond to help students understand the often challenging topics within philosophy and in doing so fosters an enthusiastic and collaborative environment. His passion for philosophy as well as teaching would be an invaluable asset to your department.

Feel free to contact me by email at Alex.au.ko@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Alexander Ko

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: METAPHILOSOPHY

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski

Email: dmokriski@gmail.com

Lectures

Time: TBA

Place: TBA

Office Hours

Time: TBA

Place: TBA

Course Description

This is a course on metaphilosophy (aka ‘the philosophy of philosophy’), which is the philosophical study of philosophy itself. Broad questions we will address include what philosophy is, how it should be done, and why it should be done. More specific questions include what the relationship is between philosophy and science, whether philosophy can produce genuine knowledge about the world, and how we should respond to philosophical disagreement. We will take a look at novel approaches to philosophy, including experimental philosophy and conceptual engineering, different traditions within philosophy (e.g. analytic vs. Continental), and feminist critiques of mainstream philosophy.

Required Text

The required text for this course is *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy* by Søren Overgaard, Paul Gilbert, and Stephen Burwood. It is available for purchase in the UCSB bookstore or online. I will also post pdfs of articles and book chapters on Gauchospace as supplementary readings (see the schedule on the back for a list of the supplementary readings).

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

Seven Weekly Homework Assignments – 35% (5% each) – Due Mondays

Take-Home Midterm Exam – 30% – Due Monday (TBA) of Week 7

Take-Home Final Exam – 35% – Due Wednesday (TBA) of Finals Week

Participation – Can bump grade up

Weekly Homework

The homework assignments consist of several short-answer questions from the material covered in lecture and/or the readings that week. No homework will be assigned weeks 5, 6, and 10.

Take-Home Exams

There are two take-home exams consisting of several short-essay questions on material covered in lecture and/or the readings. The final exam will be cumulative.

Tentative Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
1.	Intro to Metaphilosophy	<i>Chap 1: Intro: what good is metaphilosophy?</i> <i>Chap 2: What is philosophy?</i>
2.	Philosophy and Science	<i>Chap 3: Philosophy, science and the humanities</i> <i>Naturalism (For and Against) – Williamson & Rosenberg</i>
3.	Philosophical Methodology	<i>A Historical Survey of Philosophical Methodology – Daly</i> <i>Chap 4: The data of philosophical arguments</i>
4.	Metaphilosophical Skepticism	<i>Philosophical Scepticism and the Aims of Phil. – Beebee</i> <i>The What and Why of Relativism – Baghramian & Coliva</i>
5.	Traditional Armchair Philosophy	<i>The Problem of A Priori Justification – Bonjour</i> <i>Armchair Philosophy – Williamson</i>
6.	Philosophical Disagreement	<i>Disagreement as Evidence – Christensen</i> <i>Verbal Disagreements & Phil. Scepticism – Ballantyne</i>
7.	New Approaches to Philosophy	<i>Analytic Epist & Experimental Phil – Alexander, Weinberg</i> <i>Conceptual Engineering: The Master Argument – Cappelen</i>
8.	Traditions within Philosophy	<i>Chap 5: Analytic and continental philosophy</i> <i>Comparative Philosophy and Cultural Patterns – Li</i>
9.	Feminist Philosophy	<i>Defining Feminist Philosophy – Alcoff and Kittay</i> <i>Feminist Metaphysics & Phil. Methodology – Mikkola</i>
10.	Good Philosophy and Philosophy's Good	<i>Chap 7: What is good philosophy?</i> <i>Chap 8: What good is philosophy?</i> <i>Justifying a Large Part of Philosophy – Frances</i>

Disability Policy

If you need accommodations, please speak to me in advance and make arrangements with Disabled Students Services (DSP) at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarizing, will be punished. For more info on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx.

Final Note

Please feel free to bring any concerns about the course to my attention. This syllabus is liable to change, and you are responsible for any changes given adequate notice.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: METAETHICS

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski

Email: dmokriski@gmail.com

Lectures

Time: TBA

Place: TBA

Office Hours

Time: TBA (or by appointment—please give me at least 24 hours' notice)

Place: TBA

Course Description

This is a course on metaethics, the study of the foundations of moral thought and discourse. We'll cover a number of metaphysical, semantic, epistemological, and psychological issues regarding morality. The metaphysical issues include whether moral facts and properties really exist, and if so, whether they're objective, and how they relate to ordinary, non-moral features of the natural world. The semantic issues include what moral expressions mean, whether they're synonymous with non-moral expressions, whether moral statements are capable of being true or false, and whether moral disputes are genuine or merely verbal. The epistemological issues include how moral judgments can be justified, whether moral knowledge is possible, and how we should respond to moral disagreement. And the psychological issues include how moral motivation works, and what the relationship is between moral judgment, reason, and emotion.

Required Text

There is no text that you must purchase for this class. All the readings will be pdfs of articles or book chapters posted to the course site. See the next page for readings.

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

Seven Weekly Homework Assignments – 35% (5% each) – Due Mondays

Take-Home Midterm Exam – 30% – Due Monday (TBA) of Week 7

Take-Home Final Exam – 35% – Due Wednesday (TBA) of Finals Week

Participation – Can bump grade up

Weekly Homework

The homework assignments consist of several short-answer questions from the material covered in lecture and/or the readings that week. No homework will be assigned during exam weeks.

Take-Home Exams

There are two take-home exams consisting of several short-essay questions on material covered in lecture and/or the readings. The final exam will be cumulative.

Tentative Reading Schedule

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings (pdfs on Gauchospace)</u>
1	Huemer, M. (2005). "Introduction", in <i>Ethical Intuitionism</i> Timmons, M. (1999). "Metaethics and Methodology", in <i>Morality without Foundations</i>
2	Moore, G. E. (1903). "The Subject Matter of Ethics", in <i>Principia Ethica</i> Ayer, A. J. (1936). "Critique of Ethics and Theology", in <i>Language, Truth and Logic</i>
3	Mackie, J. L. (1977). "The Subjectivity of Values", in <i>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</i> Brink, D. (1984). "Moral Realism and the Sceptical Arguments from Disagreement and Queerness"
4	Harman, G. (1977). "Ethics and Observation", in <i>The Nature of Morality</i> Sturgeon, N. (1985). "Moral Explanations", in Rachels, J. (ed.), <i>Ethical Theory I</i>
5	Horgan, T. and Timmons, M. (1991). "New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth" Harman, G. (1996). "Moral Relativism", in <i>Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity</i>
6	Street, S. (2006). "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value" Vavova, K. (2015). "Evolutionary Debunking of Moral Realism"
7	Street, S. (2008). "Constructivism About Reasons", in <i>Oxford Studies in Metaethics Volume 3</i>
8	Enoch, D. (2018). "Non-Naturalistic Realism in Metaethics", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i> Railton, P. (2018). "Naturalistic Realism in Metaethics", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i>
9	Olson, J. (2018). "Error Theory in Metaethics", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i> Camp, E. (2018). "Metaethical Expressivism", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i>
10	Stojanovic, I. (2018). "Metaethical Relativism", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i> Srinivasan, A. (2017). "Feminism and Metaethics", in <i>The Routledge Handbook</i>

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Final Note

Please feel free to bring any concerns about the course to my attention. This syllabus is liable to change, and you are responsible for any changes given adequate notice.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: METAPHYSICS

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski
Email: dmokriski@gmail.com
Office Hours: TBA

I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This is a course in metaphysics, the systematic study of the nature of reality. Metaphysics can be distinguished from other areas of inquiry by its generality and abstractness. Chemistry, for instance, is the study of what chemicals there are, as well as what they're like and how they're related. By contrast, metaphysics is the study of what *things* or *entities* there are (in the broadest possible sense), as well as what they're like and how they're related (again, in the broadest possible sense). We will cover a number of topics, including causation, freedom and determinism, personal identity, the mind, time, material objects, and properties. Finally, we will close with a look into metametaphysics, the study of metaphysical inquiry itself (e.g. its methodology, whether its disputes are verbal, etc.), and feminist metaphysics, which investigates the metaphysics of social kinds and offers feminist critiques of mainstream metaphysics.

Required Text

Our main textbook, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* by John W. Carroll and Ned Markosian (C&M), is required and can be purchased online. Other readings will be posted online, including:

“Introduction: A Guided Tour of Metametaphysics” by David Manley, in
Metametaphysics

“On the Apparent Antagonism Between Feminist and Mainstream Metaphysics” by Mari
Mikkola

Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary (Ch. 1-3) by Dan Korman

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

Lecture participation – 5% – Register and use your iClicker

Section participation – 5% – See your TA for details

Weekly homework – 10% (1% each) – Due Tuesdays

Paper 1 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (2/4) of Week 5

Paper 2 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (3/3) of Week 9

Final Exam (cumulative) – 30% – Tuesday (3/17) of Finals Week from 4 to 7 pm

Paper Assignments

Each paper will consist of a defense or critique of an argument/theory we covered in class. You will (a) explain and motivate the argument/theory, (b) advance an objection, and (c) address some possible responses. Your thesis should concern whether the argument/theory is ultimately successful or unsuccessful in light of the objection. Late papers lose 1/3 letter grade per day.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will write up a short analysis of an argument/theory covered that week. This will consist of a brief summary of the argument/theory as well one objection to it. This should be no more than half a page, and it will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Papers and Exams</u>
1	C&M: Ch. 1	Introduction to Metaphysics	
2	C&M: Ch. 2	Causation	
3	C&M: Ch. 3	Freedom and Determinism	Paper 1 Assigned
4	C&M: Ch. 5	Personal Identity	
5	C&M: Ch. 6	Mind	Paper 1 Due (2/4)
6	C&M: Ch. 7	Time	
7	Korman: Ch. 1-3	Material Objects	Paper 2 Assigned
8	C&M: Ch. 9	Properties	
9	Manley	Metametaphysics	Paper 2 Due (3/3)
10	Mikkola	Feminist Metaphysics	
			Final Exam on Tuesday (3/17) from 4-7 pm

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Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarizing, will be severely punished. For more info on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx.

Final Note

Please feel free to bring any concerns about the course to my attention. This syllabus is liable to change, and you are responsible for any changes given adequate notice. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: ETHICS

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski
Email: dmokriski@gmail.com
Office: TBA
Hours: TBA

I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This is a course in ethics, the study of value and obligation. We will begin with some issues in applied ethics, the branch of ethics concerned with the moral status of particular sorts of actions. We will discuss the ethics of abortion, eating meat, and donating to charity. Next, we will move on to normative ethics, the branch of ethics that examines general theories of and systematic approaches to morality. We will cover forms of consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, and feminist ethics. Finally, we will close with a look into metaethics, the branch of ethics that investigates the foundations of moral thought and discourse. We will survey some popular views in metaethics, including moral relativism, moral nihilism, and moral realism.

Required Text

Our main textbook, *Ethics: The Fundamentals* by Julia Driver, is required and can be purchased online. The other readings are articles and excerpts that will be posted online, including:

- “A Defense of Abortion” by Judith Jarvis Thomson
- “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases” by Alastair Norcross
- “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” by Peter Singer
- “Moral Relativism” by Gilbert Harmon, in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*
- “The Subjectivity of Values” by J. L. Mackie, in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*
- “Moral Realism” by Geoff Sayre-McCord, from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

- Lecture participation – 5% – Register and use your iClicker
- Section participation – 5% – See your TA for details
- Weekly homework – 20% (2% each) – Due Tuesdays
- Paper 1 (800-1200 words) – 20% – Due Tuesday (2/4) of Week 5
- Paper 2 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (2/25) of Week 8
- Paper 3 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (3/17) of Finals Week

Paper Assignments

Each paper will consist of a defense or critique of an argument/theory we covered in class. You will (a) explain and motivate the argument/theory, (b) advance an objection, and (c) address some possible responses. Your thesis should concern whether the argument/theory is ultimately successful or unsuccessful in light of the objection. Late papers lose 1/3 letter grade per day.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will write up a short analysis of an argument/theory covered that week. This will consist of a brief summary of the argument/theory as well one objection to it. This should be no more than half a page, and it will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Paper Assignments</u>
<i>Unit 1: Applied Ethics</i>			
1	Thomson	Abortion	
2	Norcross	Eating Meat	
3	Singer	Charity	Paper 1 Assigned
<i>Unit 2: Normative Ethics</i>			
4	Driver: Intro, Ch. 2	Intro to Moral Theory	
5	Driver: Ch. 3-4	Consequentialism	Paper 1 Due (2/4)
6	Driver: Ch. 5-7	Deontology	Paper 2 Assigned
7	Driver: Ch. 8-9	Virtue Ethics & Feminist Ethics	
<i>Unit 3: Metaethics</i>			
8	Driver: Ch. 1; Harmon	Moral Relativism	Paper 2 Due (2/25)
9	Driver: Ch. 10; Mackie	Moral Nihilism	Paper 3 Assigned
10	Sayre-McCord	Moral Realism	
			Paper 3 Due (3/17)

Disability Policy

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Academic Integrity

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Final Note

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SAMPLE SYLLABUS: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski

Email: dmokriski@gmail.com

Office: South Hall 2432W

Hours: Thursdays, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM (outside at the Coral Tree Café)

I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This course is a short introduction to philosophy—both its subject matter and its methodology. The philosophical issues we will cover include whether God or free will exists, whether we can really know anything, whether abortion or eating meat is immoral, whether it's rational to fear death, and more. In thinking carefully about these issues, we will learn the basic aspects of philosophical methodology, including how to construct and evaluate arguments, how to formulate and challenge general principles, and how to devise and utilize thought experiments. The subject matter of philosophy—existence, freedom, knowledge, morality, personhood, etc.—includes things that we all think about in our daily lives whether we study philosophy or not. The purpose of this course is to help you develop the tools to do it more rigorously.

Required Text

Our textbook, *Learning From Arguments: An Introduction to Philosophy* by Daniel Z. Korman, is available as a pdf (for free) on Gauchospace, thanks to the generosity of our own Professor Korman!

I will also post supplementary readings to Gauchospace, including an essay of mine on introductory level metaphilosophy.

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

Lecture participation – 5% – Register and use your iClicker

Section participation – 5% – See your TA for details

Weekly homework – 20% (2% each) – Due Tuesdays

Paper 1 (800-1000 words) – 20% – Due Tuesday (2/4) of Week 5

Paper 2 (900-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (2/25) of Week 8

Paper 3 (1000-1400 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (3/17) of Finals Week

Paper Assignments

Each paper will consist of a defense or a critique of an argument or theory we covered in class. You will need to (a) explain and motivate the argument/theory, (b) advance an objection, and (c) consider and address some responses. Your thesis should concern whether the argument/theory is ultimately successful or unsuccessful in light of the objection. Late papers will lose 1/3 of a letter grade per day.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will write up a short analysis of an argument/theory covered that week. This will consist of a brief summary of the argument/theory as well one objection to it. This should be no more than half a page, and it will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Paper Assignments</u>
1	Intro-Ch. 1	Introduction	
2	Ch. 1-2	God	
3	Ch. 3	Free Will	Paper 1 Assigned
4	Appendix A & B	Logic & Writing	
5	Ch. 4	Knowledge	Paper 1 Due Tuesday 2/4
6	Ch. 5	Personal Identity	Paper 2 Assigned
7	Ch. 6-7	Death & Taxation	
8	Ch. 8-9	Abortion & Animals	Paper 2 Due Tuesday 2/25
9	Ch. 10	Moral Theory	Paper 3 Assigned
10	Supplement	Metaphilosophy	
			Paper 3 Due Tuesday 3/17 (During Finals Week)

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Final Note

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SAMPLE SYLLABUS: CRITICAL THINKING

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski

Email: dmokriski@gmail.com

Office: South Hall 5719

Hours: Friday, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to basic reasoning skills, using both formal and informal methods and covering both deductive and inductive reasoning. We will learn, among other things, how to identify, classify, and evaluate arguments, how to avoid common pitfalls of reasoning and argumentation, and how to determine and prove when arguments or sets of statements have certain logical features, such as validity, consistency, and equivalence. We will begin with informal methods of assessing arguments, and later develop more rigorous techniques in a symbolic notation, which captures the logical structure of a good deal of ordinary (deductive) reasoning. Finally, we will end by covering various forms of inductive reasoning, including analogical arguments, causal arguments, and inference to the best explanation.

Required Text

Our textbook, *Logic: Concise Edition* (3rd Edition), is available at the UCSB Bookstore.

Baronett, S., *Logic: Concise Edition* (3rd Edition), Oxford University Press, New York, 2016.

Our plan is to work through (most of) chapters 1, 4, 7, 10, and 14. These chapters cover, respectively, an introduction to argumentation, informal fallacies, propositional logic, analogical arguments, and scientific reasoning.

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative dates:

Nine weekly homework assignments – 18% (2% each) – Due Mondays

Section participation – 2% – See TA for details

First midterm exam – 20% – Monday February 5th, in class

Second midterm exam – 25% – Monday February 26th, in class

Final exam (cumulative) – 35% – Friday March 23rd, 12:00-3:00 pm

You may work together on homework problems, but be comfortable solving them on your own. The weekly homework assignments will be problems from the textbook (check Gauchospace for the list of homework problems each week, and for answers to the homework problems of previous weeks). Each homework will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit. Some exam problems are adapted from the textbook's online resource.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
<i>Unit 1: Basics of Argumentation</i>			
1	Intro to Argumentation	Chap. 1-1.E	HW1: Identifying Arguments
2	Evaluating Arguments	Chap. 1.F-1.H	HW2: Evaluating Arguments
3	Informal Fallacies	Chap. 4-4.E	HW3: Recognizing Fallacies
<i>Unit 2: Deduction</i>			
4	Intro to Propositional Logic	Chap. 7.A-7.B	HW4: Translating Sentences
5	Truth Functions	Chap. 7.C-7.D	HW5: Calculating Truth-Values
6	Truth Tables	Chap. 7.E-7.G	HW6: Constructing Truth-Tables
<i>Unit 3: Induction</i>			
7	Analogical Arguments	Chap. 10.A-C	HW7: Evaluating Analogical Args.
8	Causal Arguments	Chap. 14.A-14.D	HW8: Evaluating Causal Args.
9	Scientific Reasoning	Chap. 14.E-14.H	HW9: Evaluating Scientific Args.
10	Catch-up and Review		Final Exam: Friday 3/23 from 12-3 pm

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Final Note

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SAMPLE SYLLABUS: FORMAL LOGIC

Instructor

Name: David Mokriski

Email: dmokriski@gmail.com

Office: South Hall 5719

Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 3:30 PM to 4:30 PM

I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to deductive logic (i.e., the study of *truth-preserving* reasoning). We will study, among other things, how to distinguish valid from invalid inferences, identify when statements are consistent or inconsistent, and prove conclusions from sets of premises. We will begin with an informal characterization of certain logical concepts (e.g., those of validity, consistency, logical truth, etc.), before moving on to a more rigorous, formal characterization using an artificial symbolic language. Using this formal language, we will learn to symbolize natural language sentences and arguments (reflecting their logical structure), determine the logical properties of (and relations between) symbolic sentences, and derive conclusions from sets of premises using a formal, deductive method of proof.

Required Text

We will be using *The Logic Book* (Sixth Edition) as our textbook, which is available at the UCSB Bookstore. A few copies will also be on reserve at the library.

M. Bergmann, J. Moor, and J. Nelson, *The Logic Book* (Sixth Edition), McGraw-Hill, New York 2014 (Original 1980).

Our plan is to work through chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10. These chapters cover an introduction to deductive logic, as well as the syntax, semantics, and derivation system for our formal language *Sentential Logic* and its extension *Predicate Logic*.

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative dates:

Nine weekly homework assignments – 18% (2% each) – Due Tuesdays

Section participation – 5% – See TA for details

One midterm exam – 32% – Thursday February 16th, 2017 in class

One (cumulative) final exam – 45% – Tuesday March 21st, 4:00-7:00 pm

Extra credit may be offered at the instructor's discretion. You may work together on homework problems, but you should be comfortable solving them on your own. Some homework and exam problems are adapted from exercises in the textbook. Homework will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit. Answers will be posted the week after.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
1	Introduction to Deductive Logic	Chap. 1 (all)	HW1: Core Logical Concepts
2	The Syntax of <i>Sentential Logic (SL)</i>	Chap. 2-2.2	HW2: The Syntax of <i>SL</i>
3	Symbolization in <i>SL</i>	Chap. 2.3-2.4	HW3: Symbolization in <i>SL</i>
4	The Semantics of <i>SL</i>	Chap. 3-3.5	HW4: Truth-Tables for <i>SL</i>
5	The System <i>Sentential Derivation (SD)</i>	Chap. 5 (all)	HW5: Derivation in <i>SD</i>
Midterm: Thurs 2/16 in class			
6	The Syntax of <i>Predicate Logic (PL)</i>	Chap. 7-7.2	HW6: The Syntax of <i>PL</i>
7	Symbolization in <i>PL</i>	Chap. 7.3-7.4	HW7: Symbolization in <i>PL</i>
8	The Semantics of <i>PL</i>	Chap. 8-8.4	HW8: Interpretations for <i>PL</i>
9	The System <i>Predicate Derivation (PD)</i>	Chap.10-10.3	HW9: Derivation in <i>PD</i>
10	Catch Up and Review		

Final Exam: Tues 3/21 at 4 pm

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SAMPLE UNIT: INTRODUCTION TO METAPHILOSOPHY

The following is the abstract for an argumentative essay on introductory level metaphilosophy that I wrote as a supplement to the textbook I use to teach introduction to philosophy (Dan Korman's *Learning from Arguments: An Introduction to Philosophy*). The material covered is intended as the final unit in the course. The full version can be found at my website at davidmokriski.com under "Teaching".

You Know Nothing About Philosophy, Jon Snow

Views and arguments advanced in this paper are not necessarily endorsed by the author, nor are they original to the author. See the full version for sources.

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that we all completely lack philosophical knowledge. That is, when it comes to philosophical questions—questions about what really exists, what we can know, what's moral or immoral, and so on—we don't have any knowledge of the correct answers. Call this thesis 'metaphilosophical skepticism' (the 'meta' part means that it is skepticism *about* philosophical claims). I'll give two arguments for metaphilosophical skepticism: the Methodological Challenge and the Disagreement Challenge. The first argument relies on the fact that philosophical methodology involves just thinking and appealing to intuition, and yet there's no explanation of how this methodology could be reliable. The second argument relies on the fact that there is systematic peer disagreement about philosophical matters, and this gives us good reason to think that philosophical methodology is unreliable and hence not a source of knowledge. After laying out and motivating these arguments, I will consider a number of objections: that philosophical methodology is no worse off than the methodologies of mathematics and logic, that philosophical truths are mind-dependent and so easily knowable, that the presence of systematic disagreement should not force us to doubt ourselves, that most philosophical disputes are merely verbal and so not *genuine* disagreements, and that philosophical truths are relative to a perspective and so disagreements do not imply that one side is incorrect. Finally, I'll close by considering whether the thesis defended in this paper is self-defeating—after all, if we lack *all* philosophical knowledge, then that includes knowledge of the very claim that we lack philosophical knowledge.