

## COURSE INFORMATION

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. John Grey
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<b>Office:</b>	536 South Kedzie Hall Department of Philosophy
<b>Office Hrs:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1-2pm Tuesday</li><li>• 2-3pm Wednesday</li></ul> <p><b>N.B.</b> Office hours this semester will be held via Zoom at: <a href="https://msu.zoom.us/j/9506469465">https://msu.zoom.us/j/9506469465</a> (password: "philosophy")</p>
<b>Textbooks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sainsbury, R.M. <i>Paradoxes</i>. 3rd edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2009).</li><li>• Paul, L.A. <i>Transformative Experience</i>. (Oxford University Press, 2014).</li></ul>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Paradoxes arise in almost every area of philosophy: logic, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, decision theory, and ethics all involve surprising and difficult paradoxes. In this course, students will discuss and develop solutions to a range of these paradoxes.

- Space, Time, and Motion:**  
Given that space and time are infinitely divisible, how is it possible to move between any two points?
- Vagueness:**  
How many grains of sand does it take to make a heap? How many hairs on your head would you have to lose before you are bald? How many parts of your car can be replaced before it ceases to be the same car?
- Rational Choice:**  
Can a series of rational choices lead to an outcome that it is rational to avoid at all costs? If an action will lead to an outcome that changes your values and preferences, how should you decide whether to do it?
- Knowledge and Evidence:**  
If you know something to be true, should you discount all evidence against it as misleading? Is the fact that *this table is white* evidence for the fact that *all ravens are black*?
- Logic, Truth, and Self-Reference:**  
If I say that *I am lying right now*, is my statement true or false? Could it be *neither* true nor false?

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The goals of the course are threefold:

1. To practice thinking creatively about problems involving contrary or contradictory claims;
2. To practice giving explanations, both in speech and in writing, that are clear, precise, but succinct;
3. To explore a wide range of philosophical subject matter.

By the end of the course, students will have honed their ability to think critically and creatively about open-ended problems, and to explain and motivate their solutions to those problems.

## CLASS POLICIES

- **Participation:** The participation grade for the course will be determined via your contributions to a weekly discussion on Slack. You should download Slack for whatever device you'll be using to interact with our course, and you will be invited to join our workspace: [phi225.slack.com](https://phi225.slack.com). Each week, I'll choose a few of the most interesting discussions and debates to highlight in a short response video.
- **Late papers:** Papers have their grade demoted by 10 percentage points (e.g., 85% to 75%) for each 24-hour period after the due date. Better to turn in a later paper than not to turn in anything at all!
- **Academic Misconduct:** It should go without saying, but here it is: Violations of MSU's academic conduct code will result in immediate failure of the assignment, and in more serious cases, of the course. Don't cheat. See Student Regulation 1.00 for more information about what constitutes academic misconduct: <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/regulations/general-student-regulations>

## ASSIGNMENTS

There are three types of assignment you will undertake in this course:

1. **Reading Quizzes.** These are short quizzes designed to test your reading comprehension.
2. **Short Papers.** These are 300-400 word papers on a prompt given a week in advance.
3. **Final Exam.** A take-home exam consisting of a series of short essay questions.

## GRADING

## Grade Component Weights

Grade Component	Weight
Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes	20%
Short Papers	50%
Final Exam	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Grade Point Values

Final Score	Grade Point
92-100%	4.0
86-91%	3.5
80-85%	3.0
74-79%	2.5
68-73%	2.0
63-67%	1.5
58-62%	1.0

## CLASS SCHEDULE

Students should complete each reading assigned sometime during the week listed. A **reading quiz** will be posted each Monday and due by the end of the day (11:59pm) on Sunday of each week. Additionally, the due dates for the **four short papers** and the **final exam** are given in this schedule. Prompts for those papers will be posted one week in advance of the due date.

**Week 1 (Sep 2). Course Introduction & Examples**

- Galileo, *Two New Sciences* selection (online)
- Bertrand Russell, Letter to Frege, 16 June 1902 (online)

**Week 2 (Sep 7). Zeno's Paradoxes**

- R. M. Sainsbury Ch. 1 (pp. 4-21)
- Aristotle, *Physics Z.2* selection (online)

**Week 3 (Sep 14). Vagueness and Sorites Paradoxes**

- J. Robert G. Williams, "Vagueness" (online)
- Sainsbury Ch. 3 (pp. 40-66)

**[Paper 1 due Wednesday, Sep. 16]**

**Week 4 (Sep 21). Vagueness and Sorites Paradoxes**

- Gareth Evans, "Can there be vague objects?" (online)
- Delia Graff Fara, "Shifting Sands" (online; focus on sections 1, 4, and 6)

**Week 5 (Sep 28). Newcomb's Paradox**

- Sainsbury Ch. 4 (pp. 69-89)
- Robert Nozick, "Newcomb's Problem and Two Principles of Choice" (online)

**Week 6 (Oct 5). Paradox of the Self-Torturer**

- Michael Huemer, *Paradox Lost*, Ch. 4 (online)
- Diana Raffman and Sergio Tenenbaum, "Vague Projects and the Puzzle of the Self-Torturer" (online)

**[Paper 2 due Wednesday, Oct. 7]**

**Week 7 (Oct 12). Paradox of Transformative Choice**

- Laurie Paul, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-5)
- Paul, Ch. 3 selection (pp. 52-93)

**Week 8 (Oct 19). Impromptu Fall Break.**

- Contemplate the mysteries of the universe.
- Watch some leaves flutter to the ground.

**Week 9 (Oct 26). Paradoxes of Knowledge**

- Paul, Ch. 4 (pp. 105-123)
- Agnes Callard, *Aspiration*, Ch. 1 (online)

**Week 10 (Nov 2). Paradoxes of Evidence**

- Section 1 of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Formal Epistemology: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/formal-epistemology/>
- Sainsbury Ch. 5 (pp. 90-120)

**Week 11 (Nov 9). Logic, Truth, and the Liar**

- Sainsbury Ch. 6 (pp. 123-149)

**[Paper 3 due Wednesday, Nov. 11]**

**Week 12 (Nov 16). Logic, Truth, and the Liar**

- Huemer, *Paradox Lost*, Ch. 2 (online)

**Week 13. Thanksgiving Break (No class)****Week 14 (Nov 30). More Paradoxes!**

- Sainsbury, Appendix I (pp. 160-167)
- Huemer, "Seventeen Paradoxes of the Infinite" (online)

**[Paper 4 due Wednesday, Dec. 2]**

**Week 15 (Dec 7). General Lessons.**

- Sainsbury Ch. 7 (pp. 150-159)
- Huemer, *Paradox Lost*, Ch. 12 (online)

**[Final Exam due Wednesday, Dec. 16]**