

TEACHING DOSSIER

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I. AREAS OF TEACHING EXPERTISE

Here is a list of some courses I'm able to teach.

Introductory Undergraduate

Logic

Ethics

Applied Ethics, including:

Bioethics

Medical Ethics

Environmental Ethics

Introduction to Philosophy

History of Philosophy, modern era

Advanced Undergraduate

Theory of Intelligence

Epistemology (esp. History of Skepticism)

Philosophy of Mind (esp. early 20th-century British)

Intention

Animal Ethics

Graduate

Knowledge-How

Guiding questions: Is there a distinctively practical kind of knowledge? If so, what are its core features? If not, what do we mean when we ascribe know-how, as in “S knows how to *phi*”—what must be true of S?

Knowledge and Action, or Skill in Action

Guiding questions: What is the relationship between what we know and what we do? How does *thinking* inform *acting*, when it does? In what ways do cognitive and behavioral sciences contribute to our thinking about this?

Philosophy of Action

Guiding Questions: Is there such a thing as an explanatorily basic action, or an action that has no further explanation (i.e., *how* you did it)? If so, what is a basic action? Must full-fledged actions be composed of basic ones?

Conceptions of Intelligence

Guiding questions: What is natural intelligence? What does philosophical and public writing reveal about how we think about ourselves as intelligent creatures, or as “distinctively rational creatures”? What are the criteria for determining what counts as a form or manifestation of intelligence, natural or artificial?

II. TEACHING STATEMENT

There was a moment in my teaching that I often think of as formative. I had been presenting my reconstruction of an argument from the reading I assigned for that day. When I moved on to demonstrating some ways of objecting to that argument, a student raised their hand to express confusion: ‘How can you say that that premise might be false, when you just told us it was true? Aren’t you contradicting yourself?’ I learned more from this moment than this student probably realized. Because of her question, I realized that my students had been following along, copying down my reconstruction of the argument as if each premise were a matter of fact that added up to a conclusion, as if this argument illuminated the only way to understand the nature of mind. I had wanted them to think critically about the argument, but it never occurred to me to let them know to object. Now I teach very differently. I use class time to learn what students think.

If I had to express an ethos of teaching, it’d be that students have something to contribute. The student who expressed confusion contributed to my thinking about teaching philosophy, and students taking philosophy have meaningful things to say about the arguments they encounter, whether they realize it or discover it in guided discussion. So teaching well means learning from students and showing students that what they have to say is valuable.

I design my courses with an eye to maximizing student contributions. This begins with how I select course materials. The question I ask myself is *What can I use to spark meaningful discussion and disagreement in class? Or, What will develop the conversation we’ll be having at this point in the term?* I teach figures like Descartes, Hume, and Montaigne because I’m excited by their ideas and can show students why they should be, too, but I mingle historical writing with contemporary pieces, literary essays, popular articles, blog posts, and podcasts. I do this for several reasons. It shows students that philosophy isn’t just 16th-century armchair thinking, that they encounter it in the kinds of media they already engage with. It also allows students to interact with materials in various modalities—reading, listening, viewing—and helps prevent them from getting bored. Finally, it lowers the stakes, making it easier for them to come to class ready to discuss.

I find that students are most likely to contribute in meaningful ways when they can see the big picture, when they can track how a discussion relates to a guiding question. So I structure class so students always have the ‘big picture’ in view. I open by naming the two key takeaways from last class, and how those takeaways fit with the philosophical problem we’ve been discussing for the last n class days (by the time class starts, I’ve also written this on the board). Then I present to students the capital-Q ‘Question’ that will guide our discussion for the hour. The Question I present is what I understand to be the core question of the assigned material, but I don’t use it to lecture. I want students to try out their own answers first. Typically, we begin with a smaller, closely related question, which they answer in small groups (again, this is about lowering the stakes). When I call their attention back to me, I ask for each group’s key insights and, using the board, develop these insights into candidate answers to the Question. From there, I connect their answers—and their motivations for giving them—to the reading (or viewing or listening) they did in advance of class.

There are several benefits to holding class in this way. One is that students see their own ideas treated as serious philosophical views. It allows students to see for themselves what’s at stake in answering the Question, and students become invested in the collective attempt to answer. Of course, treating students’ views as legitimate does not mean treating them as all-things-considered good or accurate. It means holding their views to certain standards, evaluating them with respectful rigor. In my

experience, students tend (1) to agree *too much*—with each other, or with the views we discuss—e.g., by accepting two or more views that are actually inconsistent, or (2) to *merely* disagree, without considering their opponent’s *reasons*. So when I give students feedback, I aim to show them how their ideas take shape into views that are either compatible or mutually exclusive, helping them feel the costs and benefits of accepting one view and letting go of another. The idea is that, over time, students should learn to hold themselves responsible for their own views, where being responsible for a view—and responsive to reasons!—can mean changing one’s mind.

I use writing assignments as an opportunity to provide this kind of feedback, tailored to each student’s developing ideas. I scaffold these assignments to allow students to develop their ideas in stages, at lower stakes. Students first submit a document that collects all of their unprocessed thoughts about a topic along with materials (e.g., references, quotations) that inform their thinking about that topic. From here, students submit a tentative thesis statement, then an outline, and, finally a first rough draft that undergoes in-class peer review. Peer review allows other students to witness their peers’ views in development, and it allows students to learn from each other’s writing habits (what to emulate, what to avoid). By the time students submit their final draft (roughly two weeks after submitting the first benchmark), they’ve accumulated some credit for their final paper grade, and they know what I expect of their final drafts.

My teaching ethos serves me well. Seeing students as having something to contribute keeps me engaged in the course and excited about time spent in class. My enthusiasm is evident to students, too. I see it reflected back to me in their participation, and at the end of the course they mention it in their evaluations: “I loved the instructor. She is super passionate and made the course worth paying attention to”; “Beth...did great making the class engaging and exciting, which is especially difficult for an 8am class.”; “I loved this course... It was fun, educational, and engaging.” To my mind, this is the measure of a good day in class: that even I had fun, felt engaged, and learned something.

III. QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION DATA

Here I've compiled the mean scores for a representative sample of evaluation criteria. Wherever possible, I've included scores for criteria regarding (a) myself as instructor and (b) aspects of my course design. For complete evaluation criteria and data, please email me at bethbarker@u.northwestern.edu.

i. Evaluation Scores (Mean), as Instructor of Record

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Judgment and Decision-Making</i> (fall 2021)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 3</i> (fall 2022)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 8</i> (fall 2022)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 12</i> (fall 2023)	<i>Philosophy and Persons, sec. 16</i> (fall 2023)
course content effectively organized	3.8	4.5	4.1	4.1	4.5
course developed critical thinking	3.6	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.5
technology aided success	3.5	4.2	3.9	4	4.2
opportunity to interact with classmates	3.3	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.5
overall course effectiveness	3.4	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.5
instructor effectively presented content	3.3	4.3	4.1	4.5	4.7
instructor provided constructive feedback	3.9	4.5	4.2	4.6	4.6

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instructor cultivated inclusive environment	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.4	4.7
instructor overall effectiveness	3.4	4.3	4.2	4.5	4.7

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Intro to Ethics</i> (summer 2018)*	<i>Intro to Philosophy,</i> sec. 02 (fall 2018)	<i>Intro to Philosophy,</i> sec. 03 (fall 2018)	<i>Introductory Bioethics,</i> sec. 01 (spring 2019)	<i>Introductory Bioethics,</i> sec. 02 (spring 2019)
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	5	4.56	4.85	4.73	4.38
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	5	4.19	4.75	4.54	4
instructor fostered questions/participation	5	4.31	4.65	4.73	4.73
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	5	4.06	4.5	4.56	3.79
responded appropriately to questions/comments	5	4.5	4.4	4.54	4.07
stimulated student thinking and learning	5	4.56	4.6	4.73	4.41
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	5	4.63	4.85	4.73	4.62

*The means for this class represent the evaluations of only two students. It was my first course as instructor of record, and I learned to encourage students to complete evaluations. The data for later classes represent the evaluations of at least 16 students (i.e., for *Intro to Philosophy*, sec. 02 of fall 2018), but they average a response rate of 23 students (courses capped at 35 students, but I do not have data for how many enrolled).

ii. *Evaluation Scores (Mean), as Teaching Assistant*

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

6-point scale: 6 = very high; 1 = very low

	<i>Bioethics</i> (winter 2021)	<i>Modern Philosophy</i> (spring 2021)	<i>Elementary Logic II</i> (winter 2022)	<i>Theory of Knowledge</i> (spring 2022)	<i>Introduction to Philosophy</i> (winter 2023)	<i>Modern Philosophy</i> (spring 2023)
able to answer the students' questions adequately	5.34	5.57	4.29	5.5	4.44	5.19
well prepared for each session	5.44	5.64	5.43	5.67	4.22	5.19
communicated ideas in a clear manner	5.28	5.64	4.86	5.5	4.17	5.25
showed strong interest in teaching the course	5.47	5.71	4.43	5.67	4.67	5.47

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Intro to Philosophy</i> (spring 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01D</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01E</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Logic & Reasoning, sec. 01F</i> (fall 2017)	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01C</i> (Spring 2018)
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	4.38	3.76	4.05	4.13	4.55
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	4.23	4	4	4.20	4.32
instructor fostered questions/participation	4.23	4	4.26	4.43	4.65
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	4.23	3.8	3.89	3.87	4.45
responded appropriately to questions/comments	4.38	3.76	4.47	4.33	4.35
stimulated student thinking and learning	4.31	4.12	4.37	4.13	4.45
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	4.46	4.47	4.68	4.4	4.7

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI (continued)

5-point scale: 5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree

	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01E (Spring 2018)</i>	<i>Medical Ethics, sec. 01F (Spring 2018)</i>
instructor was knowledgeable, enthusiastic about topic	4.5	4.61
instructor effectively used examples/illustrations	4.6	4.61
instructor fostered questions/participation	4.7	4.83
instructor clearly explained ideas/concepts	4.35	4.56
responded appropriately to questions/comments	4.45	4.78
stimulated student thinking and learning	4.70	4.72
promoted atmosphere of mutual respect...	4.79	4.83

IV. SELECT STUDENT COMMENTS

The following is a representative selection of student comments. For complete evaluations, please email me at bethbarker@u.northwestern.edu.

As Instructor of Record, Loyola University

Fall 2023: Philosophy and Persons (introduction to philosophy)

“This course **genuinely made me have an interest in philosophy** and piqued my interest in the content more and more every class.”

“I thought I would hate philosophy, but I **liked this course a lot.**”

“Beth is a **very motivated and understanding** educator. She always keeps her students interests in mind whilst challenging them to learn. Additionally she does an amazing job **respecting and elevating** the voices of her students.”

“I loved how she has **so much knowledge** on the subject and was **excited to share** it with us.”

“I thought professor Barker was amazing! I genuinely enjoyed how she held the class so much and **fully looked forward to the next class** because of the discussions and lectures she would hold. She was always so professional but always made the class a space **we could all share any thoughts** and that **we could all share a laugh** together! Loved her”

“Very calm, caring, and organized. Very interesting to listen to and learn from!”

“Beth was a **great professor**. I would recommend her to my classmates. She did well on creating **discussions that were interesting and worth participating.**”

“I like how she taught the material and **organized everything out with advice from her students.**”

“Incredibly nice and friendly, **best prof. this semester.**”

“Professor Beth was an **amazing professor**. She made me think in a different way when it came to subjects we discussed in class.”

Fall 2022: Philosophy and Persons (introduction to philosophy)

“I **loved this course**. It taught me to think critically, and write from a philosophical perspective. It was **fun, educational, and engaging.**”

“Beth was very good at seeking input from students and implementing it. She also did great making the class **engaging and exciting**, which is especially difficult for an 8am class. I really liked how Beth **made the content applicable to students' personal lives.**”

“I loved the instructor. She is **super passionate** and made the course worth paying attention to. I thought she taught the course in a manner that my generation really appreciates. We did not have tests, but we had reading responses and in class discussions. **People actually participated and it was super informative.** It made me think critically.”

“They are nice to the class, and work well with what the students say, which is really nice for a class about discussing the nature of minds and living things.”

“I felt **very comfortable speaking in her class.**”

As Instructor of Record, University of Missouri

Spring 2019: Introductory Bioethics, sec. 01

“She **cared about everyone** in the room.”

“She **knew what she was talking about** and **was enthused about it.**”

“You **adapted** the course content with the extreme amount of snow days instead of forcing it all.”

“I loved that we were able to have discussions every day. Beth did a good job of **engaging everyone** and **letting everyone speak.** The readings were interesting.”

“**She did a splendid job in teaching ways for me to understand.**”

“She taught in a manner where even if the content was a topic I had little knowledge of it didn’t go over my head.”

“She did a really good job of **making concepts as simple as possible for the sake of evaluating the argument.** She focused on learning more than just our ability to memorize information. She made the assigned readings really interesting and **challenged my opinions** on topics. **I learned a lot in this class** and her **teaching style really allowed me to take away information** and not forget it after we change subjects.”

“I really just enjoyed the teacher and the discussion.”

“She did a **really good job getting concepts across.**”

Spring 2019: Introductory Bioethics, sec. 02

“Beth was very **enthusiastic** about the course and made sure we discussed a wide variety of topics and viewpoints.”

“The articles chosen were **very interesting and relevant.**”

“I loved all the topics/articles we covered. I liked the way we talked about them openly in class.”

“She was **knowledgeable** about the subject.”

“The personality of the teacher was super good, and fit perfectly with the class! They are **very kind, knowledgeable, non-judgmental, and open-minded**—all very good traits to have in philosophy. The classroom setting was very **open and safe, so people felt free to speak their mind.**”

“Good argumentations with students and teacher. Teacher challenged students, students challenged teacher.”

“The class discussions were very good and the content itself was interesting.”

“I loved the readings assigned because they offered me a new perspective on arguments that are interesting and I liked hearing what other classmates had to say about the topics.”

“She was **passionate** about the topics she taught.”

Fall 2018: Introduction to Philosophy, sec. 02

“The **kindness and respect** she gave all of us was good, also she was very **enthusiastic** about the subject which helped the class a bunch.”

“Miss. Barker did a **great job teaching a subject 7/10 students have no background knowledge of.** She challenged students and was very approachable.”

“It was an open-minded environment. The instructor was **very engaging.**”

“She’s **passionate** about what she teaches.”

“I liked her **enthusiasm.**”

“The discussion was very open, and the instructor worked to keep the topic moving.”

“The information we learned in class was interesting and Beth Barker taught it really well.”

“**Everything. Very excellent instructor.**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

Fall 2018: Introduction to Philosophy, sec. 03

“The **ability to adapt** the course to fit the class direction (e.g., quiz adaptation). On top of that this has become **my favorite class.**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

“Lectures were **extremely effective.**”

“Philosophy is a very hard course. Beth Barker made it **easier to understand while still challenging us.** It is definitely easier now to understand philosophy because of this **amazing teacher.** She really **helped me challenge myself.**”

“I liked how the class was structured—how we’d read and then discuss rather than being flat-out lectured to. I also found the topics very interesting and if I actually enjoyed writing and wasn’t so far into my current major, I’d actually consider switching to philosophy. Thanks for a great semester, Beth!”

“**Everything**” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

“Beth’s **personality** made the class so much more intriguing and funny.”

“She **makes class enjoyable** and is **knowledgeable** over the topics we talk about. You can tell she **enjoys what she is teaching.**”

“Listens to students well. **Welcomes challenges.**”

“Teacher communication. Always tried to do what was best for us.” (In response to “What aspects of the teaching or content of this course were especially good?”)

Summer 2018: Introduction to Ethics (online)

“This is **hands down the best course I’ve ever had the pleasure of taking.** My professor was very fair, clear, and consistent with what was expected from us, and a good sense of humor made learning even more enjoyable. We were given enough reading and assignments to effectively learn the material but not so much that it felt overwhelming.”

“I **enjoyed this class so much** in comparison to many other classes that I can’t imagine what would make it much better. If anything I wish it were longer so we could cover more material!” (In response to “What changes could be made to improve the teaching or the content of this course?”)

As Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University

Spring 2023: Modern Philosophy (advanced course)

“Beth was **extremely kind and easy to talk to.** She led incredibly fun discussions surrounding philosophy. She was also very **explicit in her expectations** for the papers and reading reports, which I really appreciated!”

“YOU ARE THE BEST BETH!! I absolutely adored being your student. **Your manner, knowledge, and interest made for a fantastic experience as your student.**”

“Loved her! Super engaged with students and gave **great commentary on papers.**”

“Very **engaging and fun to talk with**, and tried to stay very **approachable** throughout.”

“She **knew her stuff** and tried to make discussion section as helpful for our learning as possible.”

Spring 2022: Theory of Knowledge (advanced course in epistemology)

“Beth definitely showed strong interest in teaching the course; she **brought energy to every discussion section and clearly got joy in engaging us in conversation.** I appreciated how she read the room in section — that is, if we needed more guidance she would provide it, but she also recognized when to step back and let us have more independent conversations, sometimes jumping in with follow up questions but never dominating discussion sections with a forced/dogmatic agenda. Additionally, she was a **profound help with our papers.** She made herself available to meet even outside office hours to discuss our concerns, and always provided **great guidance and support.** She **explained things clearly**, and **made an active effort to understand our thoughts and questions**, often repeating back to us what we had said to make sure she understood. She asked interesting questions and discussion section was **always clarifying and fun.** Thanks Beth!”

“Beth was very accommodating and understanding! She is a great TA!”

“Beth was very nice and did a nice job leading discussion. Also appreciated the good paper feedback.”

“Incredibly kind TA, **distilled difficult concepts into quick and easily understandable ideas**, was generous with her time and attention. Cheerful and approachable.”

Winter 2021: Bioethics (intro-level course)

“Beth was **well prepared for every section with questions and videos that were really helpful in stimulating our discussion.** She was also very receptive to different viewpoints and did a good job in summarizing our points, which really made it feel like **she cared about what we had to say.** Finally, Beth was really helpful when I needed to write my essay and had good advice about how to improve my thesis.”

“I especially loved when she showed a scene from The Incredibles to frame our discussion about the right to refuse treatment.”

“Very kind and effective TA. Our section really engaged with each week’s content, and involved us with interesting media like quick videos and mini-articles that extended lecture topics.”

“Made our discussions a **comfortable environment for people to share their ideas.**”

“Beth was **excellent at facilitating peer discussions.**”

Spring 2021: Modern Philosophy (advanced course)

“Beth is **extremely understanding**, and did her absolute best to support students in any way she could. I loved having Beth as my TA. When I was having a tough time this quarter, Beth took time to work out deadline solutions with me and **accommodate** my struggles. Thank you Beth!!”

As Teaching Assistant, University of Missouri

Spring 2018: Medical Ethics (introductory course)

“You did a very good job of asking questions that **sparked discussion** and answering any questions we had.”

“Beth was **enthusiastic about the material** and genuinely worked hard to help other students better understand it! **LOVED this course.**”

“Beth **made everything clear and easy to understand.**”

“Beth is **very patient and attentive to details**. When answering questions, she always gave each question equal consideration and thought. She **made sure that each question was wholly answered.**”

“Responded appropriately when there was not a good answer to a student’s question... **fostered a good, respectful teaching environment.**”

“Beth was **seriously amazing**, she **always answered everyone’s questions**. Was very helpful throughout the entire semester.”

“**Great at stimulating student learning and able to answer questions** that most people had. Created a **great atmosphere for everyone.**”

“Beth was an **amazing TA!** She **fostered wonderful discussions, provided great feedback, and kept everything on track**. She **commands respect** in a quiet sort of way.”

“Always **cheerful and prepared** for class.”

“Calm presence, **very good at listening and fostering good conversations**. Also **willing to take charge** and lead class when needed.”

“Beth was **passionate and knowledgeable**. She fostered in-class participation and asked thought-provoking questions.”

“You were the **best TA I’ve had yet** in these two years.”

“Very good at being patient with all our questions. Always **explained things very thoroughly.**”

“Beth was very **enthusiastic** and always answered any questions we had. **Very positive and open learning environment.**”

“In all honesty, most discussion sections don’t help me. However, this discussion section did. Beth explained things that were unclear and **made the environment very welcoming** for class discussion.”

“Beth was **extremely knowledgeable** and **did a great job of keeping discussions going.** She was also very helpful when I had to miss several class periods for university-sponsored events. Thanks Beth!”

“My TA was **really nice and respectful towards the entire class all the time.** She educated us with further detail than provided in class. Great TA!”

“**Loved the instructor!**”

“Teacher clearly is **passionate** about her career field.”

V. SAMPLE SYLLABI

The following are versions of syllabi that I taught from. I've modified them from the originals after reflection on what aspects of the course were successful, and which could be improved.

Introduction to Philosophy

Syllabus
PHIL 130: Philosophy & Persons
Fall semester 2023

Instructor: Beth Barker

Contact: bbarker5@luc.edu

Office hours: Lewis Towers 916E at 10:30-11:20 MWF; 1:30-2:20 MW, and by appointment

This course will introduce you to the field of philosophy. We'll spend time surveying some of the questions that philosophers work on: *Is certainty rational? What, if anything, can we know for certain? How should we live if it's possible that nothing can be known for certain? What does it mean to think of ourselves as distinctively rational animals? How should we think about meaning in life and death?* And, importantly, *What is it like to be a bat?* We'll use and discuss philosophers' methods for answering these questions. This means that our approach to these questions will be *critical*, where what matters is not *which* answers you think right, but the quality of the reasons you articulate in support of (or against) a particular answer.

Objectives

In this course, you will

- gain familiarity with a variety of questions in philosophy, as well as candidate answers to these questions;
- learn how to evaluate the reasons for accepting/rejecting these answers;
- learn and exercise methods of reading and writing critically;
- learn and exercise methods of respectful disagreement in in-class discussion and in writing.

Required Texts

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, translated by Donald A. Cress. Fourth Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 9780872204201 (cost: ~\$12.50)

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Eric Steinberg. Second Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 9780872202290 (cost: ~\$9)

Recommended:

Montaigne, Michel de. *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, translated by Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene. Indianapolis: Hackett. ISBN: 978-0872206809 (cost: ~\$14)

All other course materials will be provided via Sakai.

Note: If you have not yet purchased the texts for this course, or if you have concerns about being able to purchase them (or receiving them in time for the assigned readings), please let me know.

Assignments & Grading

The only assignments you will submit in this course are three papers and the benchmark requirements for those papers (I will explain!). There are no exams.

- 20% first paper
- 25% second paper
- 35% final paper
- 20% attendance

You must complete and submit all three papers in order to receive a passing grade for the course. So, e.g., this rules out the possibility that you could skip one of the first two papers then ace the other two in order to pass the course with a 75% or 80% (best case scenarios, respectively).

Schedule

It is your responsibility to do the assigned readings for each class *before* class. I recommend that you write out any questions you have about the assigned reading. You can then email me your questions so I can cover them in class, or else you can raise them during discussion.

What is philosophy, and why does it matter?

8/28 First day! No assigned reading. Learn what to expect in this course and how we will engage in respectful critical discussion.

8/30 Three blog posts: S. Goldberg, “On Being Entitled to One’s Own Opinion”; P. Stokes, “No, You’re Not Entitled to Your Own Opinion”; M. Rowlands, “A Right to Believe?”

9/1 Plato’s *Apology*

9/4 Labor Day *no class*

9/6 Mary Midgley, excerpt from *What is Philosophy For?*

Intro to Epistemology and Rene Descartes’ method for knowing for certain: Doubt and Imagination

9/8 W. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”

9/11 W. James, “The Will to Believe”

9/13 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation One

9/15 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Two

9/18 Magdalena Balcerak Jackson, “The Imagination and The Intellect”:

<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2017/4/17/the-imagination-and-the-intellect?rq=imagination%20and%20intellect>

9/20 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Three

9/22 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Four

9/25 *how to write a philosophy paper* (no assigned reading)

Thinking about the Self: How do Mind and Body relate?

9/27 Selections from Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elisabeth

9/29 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation Six

10/2 G. Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"

10/4 T. Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?"

recommended: https://www.snexplores.org/article/artificial-intelligence-animal-language-technology?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

10/6 *flex day: wrap up discussion*

10/9 Break *no class*

10/11 Peer-Review Workshop! *remote; find instructions on Sakai*

10/13 *first paper, final draft due; come to class for an editing session*

10/16 *instructor away, no class*; recommended: start reading Hume for Wednesday

Skepticism and Testimony: Hume on Causation and Miracles

10/18 Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, IV-V, VIII

recommended: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/how-david-hume-helped-me-solve-my-midlife-crisis/403195/>

10/20 Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections X & XI

10/23 *flex day*

10/25 Jennifer Lackey, "Testimony: Acquiring Knowledge from Others"

10/27 Hume, "Of Miracles"

10/30 Veronica Ivy (formerly Rachel McKinnon), "Epistemic Injustice"

11/1 Adriana Clavel-Vázquez and María Jimena Clavel Vázquez, "Embodied Imagination: Why We Can't Just Walk in Someone Else's Shoes"

<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2018/8/5/embodied-imagination-why-we-cant-just-walk-in-someone-elses-shoes>

Skepticism and Animal Life: Montaigne

11/3 Michel de Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

11/6 Alison Gopnik, “How Animals Think”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/how-animals-think/476364/>

11/8 Montaigne, *Apology for Raymond Sebond*, excerpt

11/10 Markus Wild, “Fellow-Brethren and Compeers: Montaigne’s Rapprochement between Man and Animal”

11/13 Christine Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”

11/15 Second Paper Workshop! *you must bring *two* printed copies of your draft to class*

The Meaning of Life, Death, and Becoming

11/17 J.P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, excerpt

11/20 J.P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, excerpt

11/22 Break *no class*

11/24 Break *no class*

11/27 Agnes Callard, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*, excerpt

11/29 Laurie Paul on transformative experience

Recommended podcast: <https://hiphination.org/season-5/s5-episode-8-vampires/>

12/1 A. Camus, “Myth of Sisyphus”

12/4 T. Nagel, “The Absurd”

12/6 T. Nagel, “Death”

12/8 Final Paper Workshop! *you must bring *two* printed copies of your draft to class*

Course Policies

Attendance. Attendance is required since your success in the class depends on attending class *and* participating in class discussion. You have five “free” absences before absences will affect your course grade. You will receive a 2% deduction for each absence after your fifth. What this looks like: if you miss ten class days, your attendance score will be 50%, which means that the *best* course grade you can achieve—if you get 100% on all papers!—is a 90%; if you miss fifteen class days, your *best possible grade* becomes an 80%.

Discussion. Discussion will be our primary method of developing and testing our understanding of the views we’ll read about in this course, so it is important that everyone in class has opportunity to contribute. These are the guidelines for discussion in this course:

- (1) No individual contribution (question or comment) should exceed ~90 seconds in initial presentation
- (2) I will prioritize calling on folks who have not yet participated in a given class session (so, e.g., if four people have their hands raised, I will call on the person who has not yet contributed to that discussion)
- (3) I reserve the right to limit in-class contributions to two questions/comments per student in a given class session

Communication. If at any point you have questions or concerns about the course or your standing in it, please feel free to contact me at bbarker5@luc.edu, or to drop by during my office hours. If your email requires a response, I will typically respond within 24 hours (except over weekends). If after 24 hours you have not heard from me, you may send a reply via the same email thread (send a “nudge”) to remind me you need a response (I am only human!). If your email does not require a response, I may not reply.

Accommodations. If you are eligible for accommodations through the Student Accessibility Center (SAC), please register with the SAC so that I can know how to accommodate your learning in this course. You can find information about registering here: www.luc.edu/sac/registerwithsac/

Academic Integrity and AI. All work submitted for this course must be the result of your own exercise of your own intellect. The following shortcuts for intellectual work count as plagiarism and will be treated as such: using AI (such as but not limited to ChatGPT or Google Bard) to write all or part of an assignment, getting another human person to produce the work for you, or reproducing (in whole or in part) the work of others found online, etc., etc. Plagiarized work will be reported to the dean and will receive a grade of 0%. If you’re still not sure what counts as plagiarism, please talk with me about this! The student handbook is also available to consult: www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Grades. Grades are meant to reflect the quality of your work in this course. I will not adjust any grades for extraneous reasons, so please do not request any changes to your grade *unless* you can provide me with good reason to believe that I have underestimated the quality of one of your pieces of submitted work.

Fail-Safe Clause. I reserve the right to adjust aspects of this syllabus, such as the course policies and schedule, but I will only make changes that fit the following criteria: (1) the changes reflect the interests of the class (*re which topics of discussion interest the class and what is best for the class*), (2) the changes do not unduly burdensome while benefiting others (i.e., they’re “fair” to students and instructor), and (3) the changes are announced to the class in advance of their taking effect.

Check Canvas for reflections assigned for particular readings. For full credit, reflections should be *between 250 and 500 words each* (strict lower limit of 250; and don't go too far over 500, even when you're inspired) and *must answer the following questions*: (1) what is the main idea (thesis) the reading argues for? (2) what are (at least two of) the main reasons in support of that thesis? (3) is there one of these reasons that you think fails to support the thesis in the right way? If so, why/how? (Or is there one you think is especially good for supporting the article's thesis? If so, why/how?)

Quizzes (totaling 10% of your final grade)

There will be approximately twelve pop quizzes. These quizzes allow me to assess your understanding of the main ideas in assigned readings. Each quiz will be given at the beginning of class, so be sure to arrive on time.

Participation (10% of your final grade)

Attendance is required, but I do not give participation credit for mere attendance. You earn participation credit by asking or responding to questions and contributing to small-group discussions in class.

Grading scale:

- A 93%-100%
- A- 90%-92%
- B+ 87%-89%
- B 83%-86%
- B- 80%-82%
- C+ 77%-79%
- C 73%-76%
- And so on...

Course schedule

All readings are available online in one of three ways: via the university library (see link on the first page), the course Canvas site, or the syllabus (links below).

You should come to class with a copy of the reading and your notes on the reading handy.

Week 1: Introduction

1/23: Intro to the class and how to study philosophy
Resource: Jim Pryor, "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy,"
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>

1/25: Introduction to moral reasoning: Ruxandra Teodorescu, "Science Fiction as Resource for the Moral Imagination":
<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2023/11/25/science-fiction-as-resource-for-the-moral-imagination>

Week 2: Life and death and their significance

1/28: Jonathan Glover, "The Sanctity of Life," and Duncan Purves, "The Badness of Death":
<https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2014/05/01/the-badness-of-death/>

1/30: Thomas Nagel, "Death"

2/1: Anastasia Berg and Rachel Wiseman, "On Choosing Life":
<https://thepointmag.com/letter/on-choosing-life/>

Week 3: The beginning of life

2/4: Derek Parfit, "Rights, Interests, and Possible People"

2/6: Laura M. Purdy, "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children be Immoral?"

2/8: Anastasia Berg, *What Are Children For?* excerpt

Week 4: Abortion

2/11: *flex day: no reading; wrap up discussion*

2/13: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

2/15: Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

Week 5: Disability and the right to life

2/18: Ruth Chadwick and Mairi Levitt, "Genetic Technology: A Threat to Deafness"

2/20: R. M. Hare, "The Abnormal Child: Moral Dilemmas of Doctors and Patients," and
Alison Davis, "Right to Life of Handicapped"

2/22: *flex day: wrap up and review!*

Week 6: Racial disparity in healthcare

2/25: **Exam I**

2/27: Linda Villarosa, "Why America's Black Mothers and Babies are in a Life-or-Death
Crisis":

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/11/magazine/black-mothers-babies-death-maternal-mortality.html>

Recommended: Shalon Irving's story at

<https://www.npr.org/2017/12/07/568948782/black-mothers-keep-dying-after-giving-birth-shalon-irvings-story-explains-why> (listen or read!)

3/1: Christine Henneberg, "A Modest Proposal to Save Mothers' Lives":

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2023/11/pregnancy-childbirth-postpartum-physical-therapy-evaluation/675865/>

Recommended: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2023/solving-the-black-maternal-health-crisis>

Week 7: Voluntary euthanasia: Choosing to die

3/4: Chris Hill, “The Note”; Gillian Bennett, “Goodbye and Good Luck!” (link below)
<https://deadatnoon.com/index.html>
Recommended: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T524oCAHV1A&t=18s>

3/6: Daniel Callahan, “When Self-Determination Runs Amok”

3/8: John Lachs, “When Abstract Moralizing Runs Amok”
Recommended: Adriana Clavel-Vázquez and María Jimena Clavel Vázquez, “Embodied Imagination: Why We Can’t Just Walk in Someone Else’s Shoes”:
<https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2018/8/5/embodied-imagination-why-we-cant-just-walk-in-someone-elses-shoes>

Week 8: Killing v. letting die

3/11: Review Glover from week 2; read Peter Singer, “Is the Sanctity of Life Ethic Terminally Ill?”

3/13: James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”

3/15: Winston Nesbitt, “Is Killing No Worse than Letting Die?”

Week 9: Wrap-up and review

3/18: *flex day: wrap up Rachels/Nesbitt discussion*

3/20: Exam review

3/22: **Exam II**

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11: Nonvoluntary euthanasia

4/1: Franklin G. Miller et al., “Moral Fictions and Medical Ethics”

4/3: Ronald Dworkin, “Life Past Reason”

4/5: Rebecca Dresser, “Dworkin on Dementia: Elegant Theory, Questionable Policy”

Week 12: Organ economics

4/8: Eike-Henner W. Kluge, “Organ Donation and Retrieval: Whose Body is it Anyway?”

4/10: Janet Radcliffe-Richards et al., “The Case for Allowing Kidney Sales”

4/12: Debra Satz, “Ethical Issues in the Supply and Demand of Human Kidneys”
Recommended feature-length film: *Never Let Me Go*, Mark Romanek, dir., based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro

Week 13: Clinical trials

4/15: Benjamin Freedman, “Equipoise and the Ethics of Clinical Research”

4/17: Peter Lurie and Sidney M. Wolfe, “Unethical Trials of Interventions,” and Danstan Bagenda and Philippa Musoke-Mudido, “We’re Trying to Help our Sickest People”

4/19: Review

Week 14: Non-human animals

4/22: **Exam III**

4/24: Cartesian conception of non-human animals: René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, excerpt

4/26: Amia Srinivasan, “The Sucker, The Sucker!”: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v39/n17/amia-srinivasan/the-sucker-the-sucker> (listen or read!)

Week 15: Non-human animals

4/29: Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

5/1: Immanuel Kant, “Duties Towards Animals”

5/3: Christine Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”

Week 16: Experimentation

5/6: R. G. Frey and Sir William Paton, “Vivisection, Morals and Medicine: An Exchange”

5/8: *flex day: wrap up and review*

5/10: University reading day, no class

Exam week

Final paper due before midnight on Wednesday, May 15

Course policies

Attendance. This is required. Discussion is a key method of learning in this course, so regular class attendance will be necessary for your success in it. Additionally, you must come to class having carefully studied the assigned reading.

Devices. Please be respectful when using any devices (e.g., phones, tablets, laptops) in class. What does it mean to be respectful? Well, class is largely discussion based. So consider what it is like to try to have a conversation with someone whose attention is absorbed by the screen in front of them. I suspect you find it frustrating just like I do, so please don’t let a screen absorb your attention in our discussion-based class.

Communication.

Your responsibilities:

(1) *Checking Canvas regularly*, since that's how I'll communicate with you about all important course information, including assignment due dates. If you don't already have Canvas set up to send you email notifications, please do that.

(2) *Keeping in touch with me* about classes you expect to miss, and any difficulties you may be having with course materials. I'm happy to work with you—you just need to let me know when you need help!

My responsibilities:

(1) Responding to your inquiries in a timely manner. Please don't hesitate to contact me via email or drop in during my office hours. To any emails that require response, I will respond within 24 hours.

(2) Holding regular office hours. Please stop in!

Late work, or missing assignments. You are responsible for keeping track of due dates and submitting work on time. In general, I will not accept work turned in late. If you expect to be unable to turn in an assignment on time, **let me know in advance** so I can determine whether and, if applicable, how you might make up that assignment. Approved **make-up assignments must be completed within one week of their original due date**. This means that if you miss a quiz Friday, and I've said you can make it up, you must arrange a time with me to take the quiz before the following Friday.

Accommodations. If you have accommodations through the Disability Center (such as typically receiving time and a half for tests), please let me know so I can accommodate you appropriately in this course. <https://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu/register/>.

Academic integrity. All work submitted must be your own, original work. **Any ideas that come from another source (e.g., videos, assigned readings, an internet search, or a peer) must be cited in all written work.** I will use Turnitin to detect plagiarism and will report any cases of plagiarism to the provost, as I'm required to do. I take plagiarism very seriously. **Plagiarizing an assignment (in part or in whole) will receive a failing grade** for the assignment. Repeat instances of plagiarism will result in course failure. If you're not sure what counts as plagiarism, see Mizzou's description at <https://oai.missouri.edu/students/>.

Flexibility. Finally, as the course progresses, we may find it best to amend the reading plan laid out in the syllabus. I reserve the right to do so and will notify you of any changes to this plan via Canvas as well as in-class announcement.

VI. LETTERS OF OBSERVATION

Spring Quarter 2023

TEACHING ASSISTANT EVALUATION

Quarter/Year Spring 2023 Student Beth Barker

Instructor Reed Course Number PHIL 210-3

Course Title History of Philosophy: Early Modern

Please comment on the student's performance as a teaching assistant in this class, including such matters as quality of instruction, collegiality, punctuality, preparedness, responsiveness to faculty communications, organization and promise as an instructor.

Beth was an outstanding TA for this course. She was meticulous and prompt in handling all the course details, and her students and I appreciated her student-focused to teaching. She was proactive in bringing potential problems to my attention before they became serious, and this gave us additional time to work with students on addressing them.

Beth's grading was on-time and fair, and she offered many insightful comments to her students.

I attended one of Beth's discussion sections and was very impressed with the rapport she had built with her students. The issue under discussion was Locke's account of personal identity, and Beth provided a very modern take on the question by asking the students how they might track TV characters Rick and Morty through their appearances in different realities. Beth broke the full group into small groups to answer this question, then reconstituted the full class to discuss their initial answers. She then sent them back to small groups to talk about a more sophisticated version of the question, and then she again had them report back to the class as a whole. The students' enthusiasm for the discussion was palpable, both in the small group discussions and in the entire class. Most of the students participated in the full discussion, and the level of discourse was quite sophisticated.

It was a pleasure to work with Beth in this capacity, and I would welcome doing so again.

On the basis of performance as a teaching assistant for this course, seeking reassignment as a TA for my future courses is:

Encouraged