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# Philosophy without Borders: Self and World, East and West

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the nature of the self? What can I know? What really exists and what is it like? This course will explore how philosophical luminaries from diverse cultural and historical backgrounds have tackled some of the great questions of philosophy. We will proceed by topic, covering issues including external world skepticism, the question of the existence and nature of the self and person, the problem of induction, and the nature the mind and mental content. For each of topic, we will read, analyze, and critically assess influential arguments from both Early Modern European philosophers as well as Indian Buddhist philosophers. Along the way, we will also discuss the potential benefits, risks, and challenges of cross-cultural philosophy. Much like contemporary efforts to resolve philosophical puzzles benefit from a variety of perspectives, bringing into conversation diverse voices from the history of philosophy promises to stretch our intellectual imaginations and might just foster new ways of approaching classic philosophical problems.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### ***Weekly Argument Maps***

I. The readings for this course are challenging, but rewarding. They are best read slowly, carefully, and more than once. Optional commentaries are provided for background and further reading, which may also serve as helpful sources for your papers.

To help you digest, organize, and preserve what you've understood from the weekly readings, you will prepare a **short** reconstruction of the central argument (or one important sub-argument) from the week's assigned text. What form the argument map takes is up to you. It can be a formal reconstruction, an outline, a (hand-drawn or electronic) diagram, a flow chart, a YouTube tutorial, a mock-Wikipedia article, a PowerPoint presentation, a teaching plan, a letter to the author, or anything helps you to organize and think through the key concepts and arguments of the text.

Some questions to consider as you prepare your reconstructions: What philosophical problem/question is this argument seeking to resolve/answer? What background presuppositions does the author bring? How might the author's dialectical context figure into the argumentative structure and strategy? Which of your own presuppositions does this argument challenge, and are they justified? What clarificatory or substantive questions would you like to ask the author?

II. Submit (together with the assignment or separately) **one question**, issue, or puzzle that you hope to discuss during our class meeting.

Although these assignments will not be graded, submitting argument maps for **at least seven** of the weekly readings is required to pass the course. Submitting a discussion question every week is encouraged in order to help facilitate the best class experience. Due by 9pm the evening before the class meeting.

## ***Papers***

In order to give you a chance to explore topics in greater depth and to improve your philosophical writing skills, two short papers (3-5 double-spaced pages each) and one final paper (10-12 double-spaced pages) will be assigned over the course of the semester. Due dates, topics, and strategies for writing papers will be discussed in class.

## GRADES

Grades will be determined based on attendance, participation, weekly argument maps, and papers:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Weekly Argument Maps	20%
First Short Paper	15%
Second Short Paper	15%
Final Paper	35%

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### I. EXTERNAL WORLD SKEPTICISM

#### **Week 1: Descartes' Dream Argument**

**Required Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Synopsis, Meditation 1, Objections & Replies selections for Meditation 1, in *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch (Cambridge)

Optional Commentary:

Gary Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations* (Routledge, 2003), ch. 3.

Charles Larmore, "Descartes and Skepticism" in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Blackwell, 2006), ch. 2.

#### **Week 2: Vasubandhu's Dream Argument**

**Required Reading:** Vasubandhu, *Twenty Verses (Viṃśikā)*, verses 1–8 with auto-commentary

Optional Commentary:

Jonathan Gold, "Vasubandhu," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Birgit Kellner and John Taber, "Studies in Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda Idealism I: The Interpretation of Vasubandhu's *Viṃśikā*." *Asiatische Studien/Etudes Asiatiques* 68/3 (2014), 709-756.

### II. ESCAPE FROM SOLIPSISM

#### **Week 3: Descartes's Escape from Solipsism and the Case for the Existence of God**

**Required Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 2, 3, and 5, Objections & Replies for Meditation 3 (on the idea of God); Objections & Replies for Meditation 5 (on whether God's essence implies his existence); Principles Part I.13-21

Optional Commentary:

Gary Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations* (Routledge, 2003), chs. 5 & 7.

Lawrence Nolan and Alan Nelson, "Proofs for the Existence of God," in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Blackwell, 2006), ch. 7.

#### **Week 4: Vasubandhu's Escape from Solipsism and Case Against the Existence of God**

**Required Reading:** Vasubandhu, *Twenty Verses* and selections from *Treasury of Metaphysics with Autocommentary (Abhidharmakośabhāṣya)*

Optional Commentary:

Roy Perrett, "Buddhist Idealism and the Problem of Other Minds," *Asian Philosophy* 27, no. 1 (2017), 59–68.

Matthew Kapstein, "Mereological Considerations in Vasubandhu's 'Proof of Idealism,'" in *Reason's Traces* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 181–204.

Richard Hayes, "Principled Atheism in the Buddhist Scholastic Tradition," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (1988), 5–28.

### III. THE SELF

#### **Week 5: Descartes on the Cogito, Sum Res Cogitans, and Dualism, and Elisabeth of Bohemia on Dualism and its Problems**

**Required Reading:** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, reread Meditation 2, Meditation 4, 6; Objections & Replies for Meditation 2; *Principles of Philosophy* Part I.7-12; Objections & Replies for Meditation 6; Principles of Philosophy Part I.47-74; Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, *The Correspondence between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and René Descartes*, ed. and trans. Lisa Shapiro (Chicago, 2007).

Optional Commentary:

Gary Hatfield, *Descartes and the Meditations* (Routledge, 2003), ch. 4 and ch. 8.

Edwin Curley, "The *Cogito* and the Foundations of Knowledge," in *The Blackwell Guide to Descartes' Meditations*, ed. Stephen Gaukroger (Blackwell, 2006), ch. 3.

John Cottingham, "The Mind-Body Relation," in Gaukroger, ch. 11.

Lisa Shapiro, "Princess Elisabeth and Descartes: The union of soul and body and the practice of philosophy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (1999), 503-20.

#### *First Short Paper Due*

#### **Week 6: Vasubandhu's Case against the Self**

**Required Reading:** *Treatise on the Negation of the Person (Pudgalapratiśedhaprakaraṇa)* from his auto-commentary to the *Treasury of Metaphysics (Abhidharmakośabhāṣya)* in Matthew Kapstein, trans., *Reasons Traces* (Wisdom, 2001), 350–75.

Background Reading: Jonathan Gold, "Vasubandhu," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Ronkin, Noa "Abhidharma," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Optional Commentary:

James Duerlinger, *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons: Vasubandhu's 'Refutation of the Theory of Self'* (Curzon/Routledge 2003).

Jan Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford, 2018), 35–83.

Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy* (Ashgate, 2007), chs. 3 and 6.

### **Week 7: Hume on the Self as a Bundle of Perceptions**

**Required Reading:** Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, eds. David Norton and Mary Norton (Oxford, 2000), 1.4.5-6 and Appendix, pp. 633–36.

Optional Commentary:

Donald Ainslie, “Hume on Personal Identity,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hume*, ed. Elizabeth Radcliffe (Blackwell, 2008).

Don Garrett, “Rethinking Hume’s Second Thoughts about Personal Identity” in *The Possibility of Philosophy Understanding: Essays for Barry Stroud* (Oxford, 2011): 15–42.

Tony Pitson, “Skeptical Realism and Hume on the Self,” *Hume Studies* 39, no. 1, 37–59.

### **Week 8: Candrakīrti on Selflessness**

**Required Reading:** Candrakīrti, *Introduction to the Middle Way (Madhyamakāvātāra)*, Chapter 6 (selections) and *Clear Words (Prasannapadā)*, selections in James Duerlinger (trans.), *The Refutation of the Self in Indian Buddhism: Candrakīrti on the Selflessness of Persons* (Routledge, 2012), 55–89.

Optional Commentary:

James Duerlinger, *The Refutation of the Self in Indian Buddhism*, 90–190.

Jan Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford, 2018), 120–38.

## IV. THE MIND AND THE WORLD

### **Week 9: Berkeley's Case against Matter**

**Required Reading:** Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. J. Dancy, (Oxford, 1998), Introduction, Part I §§8-24; *Three Dialogues*, ed. J. Dancy, (Oxford, 1998), *First and Second Dialogues*.

Optional Commentary:

Samuel Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism* (Oxford, 2013), chapters. 3-4.

George Pappas, *Berkeley's World* (Cornell, 2000), chapters. 2-3.

### *Second Short Paper Due*

### **Week 10: Dignāga's Investigation of the Percept**

**Required Reading:** Dignāga, *Investigation of the Percept (Ālambanaparīkṣā)* in Douglas Duckworth et al., *Dignāga's Investigation of the Percept* (Oxford, 2016), 38–47.

Optional Commentary:

Douglas Duckworth et al., *Dignāga's Investigation of the Percept* (Oxford, 2016).

Jan Westerhoff, *The Golden Age of Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford, 2018), 220–225.

### **Week 11: Leibniz on Immaterial Substances**

**Required Reading:** Leibniz, Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason, in *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Hackett, 1989), 206–213; The Principles of Philosophy, or, the Monadology, in *Philosophical Essays*, 213–225; Leibniz to Des Bosses 5 February 1712, in *Philosophical Essays*, 198–199.

Optional commentary:

Brandon Look, "Leibniz's Metaphysics and Metametaphysics: Idealism, Realism, and the Nature of Substance," *Philosophy Compass* 5:11 (2010), 871–879.  
Don Rutherford, "Metaphysics: The late period," in Nicholas Jolley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz* (Cambridge, 1995), 124–175.

### **Week 12: Śāntarakṣita's Case against Material and Immaterial Substances**

**Required Reading:** Śāntarakṣita, *Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamakālamkāra)* in Masamichi Ichigō, "Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālamkāra*." In *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts*, ed. by Luis O. Gómez and Jonathan A. Silk. (University of Michigan, 1989), 141–240.

Optional Commentary:

James Blumenthal, *The Ornament of the Middle Way: A Study of the Madhyamaka Thought of Śāntarakṣita: Including Translations of Śāntarakṣita's Madhyamakālamkāra (The Ornament of the Middle Way) and Gyel-tsab's Dbu ma rgyan gyi brjed byang (Remembering "The Ornament of the Middle Way")* (Snow Lion, 2004).

## V. FROM SKEPTICISM TO NATURALISM AND PRAGMATISM

### **Week 13: Hume on Skepticism and Naturalism**

**Required Reading:** *Treatise* 1.4.1 and 7 and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T. Beauchamp (Oxford, Clarendon edition), *Enquiry* 7 and 12

Optional Commentary:

Don Garrett, "Hume's Conclusions in "Conclusion of this Book" in *The Blackwell Guide to Hume's Treatise*.

Janet Broughton, "Hume's Naturalism and His Skepticism" in *The Blackwell Companion to Hume*.

### **Week 14: Nāgārjuna on Sources of Knowledge and Candrakīrti's Pragmatism**

**Required Reading:** Nāgārjuna, *Dispeller of Disputes (Vigrahavyāvartanī)*, trans. Jan Westerhoff, *Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vigrahavyāvartanī* (Oxford, 2010), 19–42. Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā*, selections in Dan Arnold, "Materials for a Mādhyamika Critique Of Foundationalism: An Annotated Translation of *Prasannapadā* 55.11 to 75.13," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005), 411–467.

Optional Commentary:

Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why it Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford, 2015), ch. 7  
Jan Westerhoff, *Dispeller of Disputes*, 43–129.

### ***Final Paper Due***