

PHIL 100-007  
Instructor: Dr. Kurt Brandhorst

Office: Robinson B 458

Office Hours: Tue: 3:00-4:00 and  
Wed: 3:00-4:00  
or by appointment

Email: [kbrandho@gmu.edu](mailto:kbrandho@gmu.edu)

**Where to find information about this course:** all course information including the syllabus, assignments, and any additional announcements or changes to the schedule will be posted on the Blackboard site for this course.

**You should also check your GMU email regularly for class announcements.**

**Department webpage:** <http://philosophy.gmu.edu/>

**Guide for Writing in Philosophy:** <http://philosophy.gmu.edu/undergraduate/writing-standards>

## COURSE SYLLABUS

This course examines philosophical questions surrounding the modern philosophical subject, self or ego. A close reading of Descartes' *Meditations* establishes the foundation for thinking about the modern subject. Readings from Locke explore the role of memory and consciousness in thinking the self. We look at Freud in order to problematize the traditional readings of the self and consciousness while introducing new ways to think about the self. Not only does Freud introduce us to the body as a crucial element in understanding the self, his work also introduces us to questions of sexuality and gender that are absent from the prior accounts. Sartre's existential account of the subject emphasizes the role of (internal) decision in the formation of the self, while Foucault suggests that the self is constructed by forces external to the individual. And finally Butler examines the issue of gender and raises the possibility of the self as performance through and through. Through close readings of these texts and work with these thinkers we will develop an understanding of the issues involved in questions of the self. In addition, as an introduction to philosophy, we will explore different ways of thinking and styles of philosophy that extend beyond this particular question.

## REQUIRED TEXTS AND READING

There are TWO texts you are expected to acquire for the course:

Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald Cress, Hackett, 1993

ISBN-13: 978-0872201927 ISBN-10: 0872201929

- Other editions of this text exist but it is essential that you get the Cress translation

Freud, S. *The Ego and The Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey, WW Norton, 1990

ISBN-13: 978-0393001426 ISBN-10: 0393001423

**NB: e-books are not acceptable for scholarly work unless they include page numbers for reference purposes.**

In addition, there are several texts posted on Blackboard as pdf (please download and print these --- see below):

- Bartkey, S. "Foucault, Femininity, the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" (from *Feminism and Foucault*)
- Butler, J. *Gender Trouble* (selections from Parts One and Three)
- Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish* (selections from "Docile Bodies" and "Panopticism")
- Freud, S. *The Question of Lay Analysis* (selections)
- Freud, S. "The Infantile Genital Organization" & "Medusa's Head"
- Locke, J. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (selections from Book II)
- Sartre, J-P. *Being and Nothingness* (selections from "Bad Faith")
- Sartre, J-P. *Being and Nothingness* (selections from "The Look")

I may post additional short texts to Blackboard as the semester progresses.

**Readings on BB:** Beginning in Week Four we will be using texts printed from Blackboard. Unless you have copies of the original source material (i.e. books), **you will be responsible for printing off each of the readings listed above so that you have a paper copy to work with in class.**

**Please note: this is a course requirement.** We will be doing close work with the texts both in class and for assignments. In addition, **all laptops, phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class time**, so you must have a paper copy of each class reading with you.

Printing costs should not exceed \$11 (in total), based on the JC print costs of 10c per page. A proportion of your participation grade will be attached to producing your own portfolio of readings (see section on participation below). Checklists for the portfolio will be distributed at the first class.

### Course Reading Expectations

The schedule of readings is given below. I will expect you to have done the set reading before the relevant class. This means reading through the set text or texts *at least* once; going back and re-reading either the whole text, or the passages that seem especially important/difficult/puzzling/interesting to you; and writing down your thoughts and questions on the text (I recommend keeping a notebook just for your reading notes for this course that you can bring to class, as a reminder of what you want to ask or comment on).

- If you don't have questions, you're not reading properly! If you do the reading in advance, you will get a lot more out of classes, because you will have a lot more to put in.

### **Questions and Problems:**

If you have a question about the course, or a problem with a class or assignment, please do one or more of the following:

- ask in class (often others will have the same question/concern, so this will help everyone)
- email me with a question or query: [kbrandho@gmu.edu](mailto:kbrandho@gmu.edu)
- come and see me in my open office hours or email me for an appointment

I will respond to emails as soon as I reasonably can, though as a general rule I will not answer emails in the late evening or between Saturday morning and Sunday evening. This means you need to plan ahead – *please don't leave questions about assignments or reading until the last minute!*

### COURSEWORK AND GRADING

Basic breakdown:

1. Attendance:	0%
2. Participation:	5%
3. Butler Quiz	5%
4. Descartes and Freud Worksheets	10% each
5. Two Response Papers:	15% each
6. Mid Term Exam	15%
7. Final Exam:	25%

1) Attendance:

There are no points for showing up. However, showing up has value for all other aspects of assessment and you should not expect to do well on the course if you miss classes. **In addition, points can be lost for not showing up:** we only have 28 class meetings on the material of the course; every absence after the second will result in a 10%

penalty in the participation grade. Hence 12 absences would result in a 100% reduction of the participation grade. Regarding the penalty, extenuating circumstances will be considered in line with University policies but cannot make up for the effect that an absence has in understanding the material.

## 2) Participation:

Class discussion is an essential feature of the course and I will regularly invite participation. Please come prepared to discuss the material as assigned and be ready to take part in classroom activities. This means both reading and thinking about the texts in advance of the class meeting. Participation is distinct from both presence and mere talk. There will be short reading quizzes from time to time and I will be using Blackboard to set reading/discussion questions each week. You will be expected to participate in these Blackboard discussions: post a serious and meaningful comment for at least 8 of the 14 weeks to receive participation points.

**Portfolio of readings:** as noted above, from Week 4 onwards you are responsible for printing off the set readings for each class (all readings will be available on BB). A checklist of the required readings will be provided in class 1. As having a paper copy of the text to work with in class is essential, 1/5 of your of your participation grade will be dependent on producing your own portfolio of course readings. Once you have printed off the readings for the course, you should ask another member of the class to check your portfolio is complete, sign off the check list for you, and hand it to me. **This must be completed by the end of class on Wednesday September 13th (week 3).**

## 3) Butler Quiz:

At the end of the part of the course on Butler there will be a short in-class quiz

## 4) Descartes & Freud Worksheets:

There will be two take-home worksheets on the texts of Descartes and Freud. These will be 5 or 6 short answer questions. Answers are expected to be text based.

## 5) Response Papers:

During the course of the semester 2 response paper topics will be assigned (see course outline below for dates) The responses will be essays of 3-4 typed pages and will involve no more than 25% summary of the assigned text: analysis, evaluation and critical explication are expected (this is an occasion for you to demonstrate thought as well as understanding). These assignments will have firm due dates and no responses will normally be accepted late without specific extenuating circumstances --- please contact me if you are not able to meet the deadline. **NB: I will answer content and formal questions about these papers in advance of the due date but under normal circumstances I will not read drafts for these papers --- this is a matter of volume and fairness; I may, however, propose to you as an individual that you should submit a draft. My office hours (see above) are a good time to meet to discuss your ideas and pose questions.**

## 6) Mid Term Exam:

On Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup> there will be an in class Exam on all of Descartes and Locke that we have covered. This exam will take the full class time and involve a series of short essay-like answers (i.e. NOT multiple choice).

## 7) Final Exam

The Final Exam will be held during the normal exam period and will cover material from the whole course. Further information about the format of the exam will be available after Thanksgiving.

## \*) Plagiarism

This is a major violation of trust and academic integrity. Do not present others' work as your own. Passive Plagiarism (failing to cite sources) is as bad as Active Plagiarism (downloading an essay off the internet). **For acceptable citation models, see Purdue University Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL), "Research and Citation": <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>**

Also, work submitted for this course must be uniquely created for this course. If I suspect plagiarism I will inform you and the university administration in writing. **NB: I reserve the right to conduct an oral examination on any piece of work.**

The Honor Code: "All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at [academicintegrity.gmu.edu](http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu). All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review."

### **Commitment to Diversity**

In keeping with the general ethos of the University, this class seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across differences. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

NB This does not mean not being critical: respecting others' views means taking them seriously, and taking them seriously means thinking about their strengths and weaknesses, asking questions, and offering constructive criticisms or alternative viewpoints where appropriate. It also means thinking about where the views of others challenge our own, and being open to what they have to teach us. Valuing diversity is not just an attitude – it is a matter of developing an active practice. Amongst other things, this practice involves:

- learning to listen to other perspectives;
- being open to criticism of one's own views;
- being willing to evaluate different positions while being unsure where one stands;
- having good reasons for one's views, but being willing to change one's mind;
- not rushing to judgment;
- basing critical comments or questions on as good an understanding of another person (or text or theory) as one can manage;
- *and* being willing to accept that there will always be things one cannot see or understand;
- learning to express criticisms and differences of opinion in ways that are not personal or hurtful and that leave space for other voices.

Never be afraid to ask a question or to risk saying something that might be wrong – that is how we learn. But equally, never be afraid to listen to the questions and answers of others, and to let their views challenge and change how you think.

### **Submitting Written Work**

All written assignments must be submitted on the Blackboard site for this course by the relevant deadline (see course schedule below). There will be a clearly marked section on Blackboard for each assignment.

One paper copy must also be handed in at class or to the PHIL100-007 course essay box in the Philosophy Office (Robinson B 465) during office hours (9am-4pm, weekdays). The paper copy should normally be handed in by 4pm on the day of the deadline.

Please note:

- The **date of submission** will be taken from when you upload the work on Blackboard. If there is a system problem that means you can't upload the work, email me and let me know.
- Once a paper copy is submitted, you can expect feedback/comments and notice of your grade. For paper copies submitted on the due date, I make every effort to mark and return this work within 2 weeks. Paper copies submitted after the due date but before the end of the semester go to the end of the grading queue (note that I have 4 classes this semester) and will be returned as soon as possible. If no paper copy is submitted by the end of the semester a grade will still be entered but you will not get feedback/comments on your work.

Extensions can be arranged in exceptional circumstances if you have a good reason for submitting work late but you must let me know (by email is fine). Extensions cannot be given beyond the last day of the exam period. **Whenever possible it is much better to try to arrange an extension with me in advance.** This will make things less stressful for all concerned: you will be able to plan your assignments more effectively; I will be able to plan my grading and give better (less rushed) feedback.

### COURSE OUTLINE

NB: The reading schedule is subject to change

#### WEEK ONE

Reading: Course Syllabus  
Descartes, Meditation One

Aug 28: INTRODUCTION

Aug 30: The Method of Doubt

#### WEEK TWO

Reading: Descartes, Meditation Two

Sep 4: **NO CLASS**

Sep 6: The Cogito

#### WEEK THREE

Reading: Descartes, Meditations Two & Three

Sep 11: Substance

Sep 13: God

#### WEEK FOUR

Reading: Descartes, Meditation Four  
Locke, Locke BK II, Ch. i (pdf)

Sep 18: Descartes: Will  
**DESCARTES WORKSHEET ASSIGNED**

Sep 20: Locke: Ideas

#### WEEK FIVE

Reading: Locke, Locke BK II, Ch. xxiii, xxvii (pdf)

Sep 25: Substance  
**DESCARTES WORKSHEET DUE**

Sep 27: Identity

WEEK SIX

Reading: Locke, *Locke BK II, Ch. xxvii* (pdf)

Oct 2: Personal Identity

Oct 4: **MID TERM EXAM**

WEEK SEVEN

Reading: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Ch. I-II

Oct 9: **NO CLASS --- MEET TUESDAY OCT 10**

Oct 10: The Unconscious

Oct 11: The Id and the Ego

WEEK EIGHT

Reading: Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Ch. III

Freud, "Infantile Genital Organization & Medusa's Head" (pdf)

Freud, "The Question of Lay Analysis" (pdf)

Oct 16: The Super Ego

Oct 18: The Body, Sexuality and Gender

**FREUD WORKSHEET ASSIGNED**

WEEK NINE

Reading: Sartre, "Bad Faith" (pdf)

Oct 23: Existentialism

**FREUD WORKSHEET DUE**

Oct 25: Bad Faith

WEEK TEN

Reading: Sartre, "Bad Faith" (pdf)

Sartre, "The Look" (pdf)

Oct 30: Consciousness and the Look

Nov 1: The Role of Others

**RESPONSE PAPER ONE ASSIGNED**

WEEK ELEVEN

Reading: Foucault, "Docile Bodies"

Nov 6: Disciplined Bodies

**RESPONSE PAPER ONE DUE**

Nov 8: The Body and the Self

WEEK TWELVE

Reading: Foucault, "Panopticism"

Nov 13: The Panopticon

Nov 15: The Panoptical Self

**RESPONSE PAPER TWO ASSIGNED**

WEEK THIRTEEN

Reading: Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power"

Nov 20: Bodies, Space and Gender

**RESPONSE PAPER TWO DUE**

Nov 22: **NO CLASS**

WEEK FOURTEEN

Reading: Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 22-34 (pdf)

Nov 27: Sex and Gender

Nov 29: Identity as Regulative Ideal

WEEK FIFTEEN

Reading: Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 175-193 (pdf)

Dec 4: Gender as Performance

Dec 6: Identity as Performance

**BUTLER QUIZ**

**FINAL EXAM WEDNESDAY DEC 13<sup>th</sup>**