Instructor: Jose Martin
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Office hours (online): TR 1-2pm, and by appointment.

Course Description: Most of us make fundamental assumptions about the world, assumptions which we rarely question or even reflect upon. We might assume, for example, that there exists an all-powerful God, and that the presence of a God can be reconciled with the existence of evil in the world; or that some actions are morally right, whereas other actions are morally wrong; or that we can freely choose the actions we will perform; or that people are very different from other animals or machines, since people have minds with which to think. We will devote this course to examining whether and to what extent such assumptions are justified.

Required Text:


Assignments:

1. Quizzes. Every week you will have to complete a short and simple quiz on the assigned readings using the WebCampus Assessments tool. The purpose of the quizzes is to verify that you studied the assigned readings and the additional summaries and outlines posted in the corresponding WebCampus learning module.

2. Discussion assignments: main posts. Every week you will have to submit thoughtful answers to two questions about the assigned readings using the WebCampus Discussions tool. You will be sharing these assignments with your classmates in the Discussions area. Each answer should consist of at least 250 words.

3. Discussion assignments: comments. You are expected to read and briefly comment on postings by your fellow students. Every week you will have to reply to, or briefly comment on, at least two other students. For each reply a thoughtful paragraph of 100 words will suffice.

4. Two Critical Papers: I will post suggestions about specific paper topics, as well as guidelines about the appropriate structure of the essay, in our WebCampus page. Each paper should be at least 5 pages long.

Grading:

Quizzes: 16%

Discussion Assignments: 42%

Papers: 42%
Tentative Schedule of Readings:
(Precise reading assignments for each week will be provided in the weekly Learning Modules):

Perry, Bratman, Fischer: On the Study of Philosophy (p. 3)
Russell: The Value of Philosophy (p. 18)
Aquinas: The Existence of God (p. 44)
Paley: Natural Theology (p. 46)
Pascal: The Wager (p. 51)
Russell: Why I am not a Christian (p. 55)
Leibniz: God, Evil, and the Best of All Possible Worlds (p. 94)
Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (p. 59)
Perry: Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God (p. 96)
Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy (p. 136)
Grau: Philosophy and The Matrix (p. 160)
Armstrong: The Nature of Mind (p. 259)
Perry: A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality (p. 326)
Parfit: Personal Identity (p. 357)
Velleman: So It Goes (p. 371)
Van Inwagen: Freedom of the Will (p. 400)
Nagel: Moral Luck (p. 440)
Mill: Utilitarianism (p. 460)
Williams: Utilitarianism and Integrity (p. 487)
Velleman: A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics (p. 521)
Wolf: Moral Saints (p. 755)
Camus: The Myth of Sisyphus (p. 775)
Nagel: The Absurd (p. 768)