

# Introduction to Philosophy

## Phil 111-01/02, Syllabus (v5)

### Course Info

**Instructor:** Richard Fry, rfry@siue.edu

**Meeting Time:** Section 01: M/W, 12:00-1:15, Peck Hall 0307  
Section 02: M/W, 1:30-2:45, Peck Hall 0307

**Office Hours:** Monday/Wednesday 3:00-4:00PM, Peck Hall 3210

### Course Description:

By reading speculative fiction, we come to see more clearly both how our lives are and how they should be. Philosophy, as a discipline, pursues closely related questions and lines of thought. In this course, we will use a novel to jump-start our thinking about our selves and the wider world around us. It will serve as a starting point for conversations about language, minds, gender, emotion, politics, civilization, surveillance and individuality, among other issues. We will read our novel in tandem with scholarly philosophical work both historical and contemporary. You will be assessed primarily through written papers. No antecedent familiarity with speculative fiction is required or expected.

### Required Texts:

Leckie, *Ancillary Justice*. Paperback, October 2013. ISBN: 031624662X

*All other readings will be made available through the course Blackboard site. You are responsible for bringing your readings to class.*

### Course Goals:

This course has several goals:

- To use speculative fiction to introduce you to thinking about philosophical problems.
- To introduce you to important texts and ideas in contemporary philosophy and its history.
- To cultivate your own thinking about central problems in ethics and other areas of philosophy, especially as they bear on issues you encounter in your own life.
- To improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
- To develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

## Policies

**Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism:** You are expected and required to uphold SIUE's standards of academic honesty in this course. Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable. In effort to uphold this university's high standards, confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course. Familiarize yourself with what counts as plagiarism and SIUE's policies: <http://www.siue.edu/lovejoylibrary/services/instruction/plagiarism.shtml>, <http://www.siue.edu/policies/3c2.shtml>

**Preparedness and Attendance:** You are responsible for being prepared for class and comporting yourself in an appropriate manner. This includes reading *and bringing* the assigned material, thinking about it so that you can ask questions, arriving on time, and participating in discussion.

**A Safe and Productive Environment:** *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.* Some of the topics we will address this semester can provoke powerful emotions, especially for people who have had or are currently having difficult experiences. Be mindful of how the topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class and treat your classmates with respect and courtesy.

**Due Dates:** You are responsible for turning in your work on time. Each 24 hours or portion thereof that a piece of written work is late will result in the subtraction of 1/3 letter grade. All work more than a week late will receive an F.

If you need an extension for written work, email me *as soon as possible* with a brief description of your situation and—if I approve an extension—we will work out an appropriate timeframe. Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

**Completion of Assignments:** All of the work assigned for this course is essential. If any assignments are not complete before the end of course, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

**Grades and Grading:** The papers for this course will be graded anonymously. Please submit this work through Blackboard *without* your name. Failure to do so will result in a penalty to your grade.

If you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask *in writing* for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted *within one week*, but no sooner than *two days after* the assignment is returned. Your written request *must explain why* you believe the work deserves a different grade. Please note that *if* a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

**Changes:** I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Blackboard.

# Assignments and Assessment

*More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.*

## **Reading Quizzes (15%)**

Starting September 1st, each Tuesday afternoon, a short, 2-3 question reading quiz will be made available through Blackboard. This quiz is to be completed before class on Wednesday. The questions should be easy to complete if you've read the material.

## **Short Writing Assignments (30%)**

During the semester, you will write two short papers (2-3pp). These assignments will call on you to engage with the texts and ideas presented in class; you will be working out positions, arguments and/or consequences—not reporting opinions or personal experience—as assigned. The best of these short papers will count for 20% of your final grade, the second best 10%.

## **Reflection Paper (10%)**

Near the end of the semester, you'll be assigned a 'reflection' paper where you will connect themes from the course with your own experience. This will be a different sort of writing from the other writing we will do in a course, and the grading for this assignment will be primarily for effort.

## **Discussion Question (5%)**

Before our discussion with author Ann Leckie, you'll turn in a question to be used in our discussion with her.

## **Final paper (40%)**

At the end of the semester, you'll write a 4-5 page paper that takes a stand on an issue we discussed in class. This paper will be due on the day of our final class meeting.

## **Participation**

I reserve the right to adjust your grade up or down up to 3% based on your comportment in class. Positive contributions to participation include making comments in class, asking/answering questions, coming to office hours or emailing me. You'll lose points for looking at your phone, sleeping, failing to bring assigned readings, arriving consistently late, etc.

## **Extra Credit**

I will post a list of Department of Philosophy events to Blackboard. You may attend up to three of these talks and write up a 100-200 word summary of an argument the speaker made. If your argument summary is acceptable, you will receive +1% to your final grade, up to a total of +3%. (Note that you may only do *two* of these from the SIUE Undergraduate Conference, and if you do two, one must be the keynote.) Paragraphs should be turned in within a week of the event.

# List of Class Meetings

*You are expected to read the material listed before the class-day listed.*

## 1: Introduction

**24 Aug** – Introduction to Philosophy

**26 Aug** – Introduction to the Course – Read: *Ancillary Justice* 1-41 (Ch.1-3)

## 2: Personal Identity

**31 Aug** – Psychological View – Read: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II.xxvii

**02 Sept** – Bodily Concern – Read: Williams, “The Self and the Future”

## 3: Aptitude & Meritocracy

**09 Sept** – Bias in Testing – Read:

Murray, “Abolish the SAT”

Zumbrun, “SAT Scores and Inequality”

Tabarrok, “The SAT, Test Prep, Income and Race”

*The Economist*, “An Hereditary Meritocracy”

SEP, “Equality of Opportunity,” pt.1 (pp.1-19)

*Ancillary Justice* 42-100 (Ch.4-6)

**14 Sept** – Remediating Inequality – Read:

SEP, “Equality of Opportunity,” pt.2 (pp.19-39)

Beauchamp, “In Defense of Affirmative Action”

*Ancillary Justice* 101-153 (Ch. 7-10)

**16 Sept** – Meritocracy – Read: SEP, “Equality of Opportunity,” pt.3-6 (pp.39-56)

## 4: Privacy & Surveillance

**21 Sept** – Government – Read:

Solove, “‘I’ve Got Nothing to Hide’ and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy”

The SIGINT Philosopher, “The SIGINT Philosopher is back with a new face”

*Ancillary Justice* 154-217 (Ch. 11-14)

**23 Sept** – Corporations – Read:

Golbeck, “What Can Companies Predict From Your Digital ‘Trail?’”

Hill, “How Target Figured out a Teen Girl was Pregnant Before her Father Did”

Arment, “The Ethics of Modern Web Ad Blocking”

*Ancillary Justice* 218-254 (Ch. 15-16)

**28 Sept** – Ashley Madison and Celebrity Photos Hack – Read:

Newman, “Hackers Release Ashley Madison User Data”

Herman, “Early Notes on the Ashley Madison Hack”

DailyNous, “Philosophers on the Ashley Madison Hack”

Vanity Fair, “Jennifer Lawrence Calls Photo Hacking a ‘Sex Crime’”

*Ancillary Justice* 255-291 (Ch.17-18)

## 5: Death

**30 Sept** – Is Death a Harm? – Read:

Epicurus, “Letter to Menoecus”

*Ancillary Justice* 292-329 (Ch.19-20)

## 6: Language

**05 Oct** – Linguistic Relativity – Read:

Reines & Prinz, “Reviving Whorf: The Return of Linguistic Relativity”

Twain, “The Awful German Language” (excerpts)

*Ancillary Justice* 330-384 (Ch.21-23)

Short Writing Assignment #1 due 05 Oct

**07 Oct** – Pronouns – Read:

Leckie - “He said, She said”

McCulloch, “What Does ‘She’ in Science Fiction tell us about Language on Earth”

Vuolo, “The Real Story Behind The New Yorker's ‘Pronoun Envy’ Poem”

**12 Oct** – Dehumanization – Read: Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games”

## 7: Language & Minds

**14, 19 Oct** – Intelligence – Read: Descartes, Excerpt from “Discourse on Method pt. V”

**21 Oct** – The Imitation Game – Read: Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”

**26 Oct** – The Chinese Room – Read: SEP, “The Chinese Room” §1-3

**28 Oct** – Objection to Chinese Room – Read: SEP, “The Chinese Room” §4

## 8: Morals

**02 Nov** – Duty – Read: Kant, *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pt. 1

Short Writing Assignment #2 due 02 Nov

**04 Nov** – Liberty – Read: Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch.1

**9 Nov** – Slaves and Colonies – Read:

SEP, “Aristotle’s Political Theory,” §3

Campbell, “Mill’s Liberal Project and Defense of Colonialism...”

**11 Nov** – Colonization and Occupation – *Deep Space Nine* s6e11, “Waltz” (in class)

**16, 18 Nov** – Insubordination – Read: Roush, “Constitutional Ethics”

Reflection Paper due 18 Nov

**30 Nov** – Wrap up on morals

Question for Leckie Discussion due 30 Nov

## 9: Miscellaneous

**02 Dec** – Discussion with author Ann Leckie

**07 Dec** – Killer AI & Roko’s Basilisk – Read:

Auerbach, “Roko’s Basilisk, the Most Terrifying Thought Experiment”

Glasgow, “Should We Care About the Preservation of our Species?”

Luckerson, “Five Very Smart People who think AI Could Bring the Apocalypse”

**09 Dec** – Class’s Choice – *tbd*

Final Paper is due 09 Dec

# Resources

## *Philosophical Resources*

**The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:** <http://plato.stanford.edu>

**Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy:** <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

**Philpapers.org:** <http://philpapers.org>

**Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper:** <http://goo.gl/iDzgFb>

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## *Academic Resources*

**Disability Support Services:** Student Success Center, Room 1270

<http://www.siu.edu/dss/> and [disabilitysupport@siue.edu](mailto:disabilitysupport@siue.edu)

Provides accommodations to disabled students. DSS also has services which students can use to increase skills in learning, time management, and test-taking.

**Instructional Services:**

<http://www.siu.edu/is/>

Provides instructional support unit for the students, faculty and staff. Helps the underprepared to prepare, the prepared to advance, and the advanced to excel.

**Writing Center:** in the Academic Advancement Center

<http://www.siu.edu/is/writing/>, 618-650-2045

The writing center assists you as you analyze your paper and explore ways to improve it. Our primary concern is to help you become a better writer. To do this, we challenge you to learn more about composition and the conventions of Standard English.

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## *Health and Wellness Resources*

**Counseling Services:** Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/counseling/>

Provides individual counseling, counseling groups, healthy living workshops, consultations, and referrals. Special attention is paid to the ongoing issues affecting college students.

**Student Health Clinic Services:** Student Success Center room 0222

<http://www.siu.edu/healthservice/clinic/index.shtml>