

CONTENTS

1. **Teaching Methodology** ..... 1

2. **Classes Taught** ..... 3

3. **Sample Course Material** .....6

    3.1 Sample Syllabus ..... 6

    3.2 Specifications Grading Rubric ..... 9

    3.3 Sample Paper Grading Rubric ..... 15

4. **Student Evaluations** ..... 15

    4.1 Spring 2017 Evaluation .....15

    4.2 Fall 2016 Evaluations ..... 18

1. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

My teaching methodology reflects my conviction that the primary goal of philosophical instruction is to promote careful, analytical reading, thinking and writing. In my teaching, I have implemented a wide range of strategies to better achieve this goal.

*Analytical Reading*

In order to help my students better appreciate the structure of philosophical prose, I have them submit weekly reading summaries composed of “what it says” and “what it does” statements. A “what it says” statement attempts to summarise the content of an assigned reading. A “what it does” statement describes what the author seeks to accomplish via the content presented. Having students complete “what it says” and “what it does” statements prior to in-class discussions not only encourages careful reading, but also increases student awareness of the structure of the papers read, which arguments are most central for the author’s goal, and overall significance of the author’s claims. Another effective strategy for the promotion of careful reading is playing the “believing and doubting game”. When playing the “believing game”, students read a text empathetically, attempting to see matters from the author’s perspective, and (if necessary) trying to walk in the author’s historical/cultural shoes. I have found that

describing the exercise as a game makes students more willing to put aside their natural resistance to ideas that differ from their own. When playing the “doubting game”, students adopt the role of devil’s advocate, raising objections to, and looking for weaknesses in, the author’s argument. I have found that when this exercise is undertaken subsequently to the “believing game”, it leads to a more balanced appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of a class reading.

### *Critical Thinking*

One major obstacle to critical thinking, particularly among undergraduates, is intellectual egocentrism—an inability to imagine alternative views on a given issue. In order to push students past their prejudices and natural mental blocks, I have found it highly effective to organise in-class role-playing exercises in which students briefly debate each other in the persona of an assigned philosopher. For example, in my epistemology course at Carleton College, I had four students debate each other, where two pretended to be the externalists, Alvin Goldman and Fred Dretske, and two others pretended to be the internalists, Richard Feldman and Roderick Chisholm. Students were only allowed to use arguments that were consistent with the positions of the thinkers they were role-playing. This exercise allows students to gain a better appreciation of the positions and motivations of the various readings and thinkers covered in class. Moreover, I found that such role-playing was an effective tool in getting members of the class who were reluctant to voice their personal views on a particular issue to be more active. Defending someone else’s views meant that there was much less at stake. Furthermore, students typically found the role-playing format highly stimulating, and it generated a relaxed and fun in-class atmosphere.

### *Effective Writing*

Philosophical writing, if correctly executed, is almost always a type of persuasive writing. In order to better communicate this fact to my students, I have them engage in the following “before reading / after reading” exercise while planning their papers:

Before reading my paper, my readers will believe: \_\_\_\_\_.

After reading my paper, my readers will believe: \_\_\_\_\_.

I have found that this simple exercise helps students to keep in mind that their writing aims to take the reader from one set of beliefs or assumptions to another. It also forces them to think about their target audience at the very beginning of the writing process. Left to their own devices, most undergraduates either fail to consider their audience until the very end of the writing process (if at all), or compose papers with the instructor in mind. Failing to consider their audience, or writing with the instructor in mind, often leads students to be less clear in their writing. Students assume that since the subject matter is already familiar to the instructor, there is no need to define technical terms or clarify central concepts. However, often it is only when a student has tried to clarify an

idea for someone lacking philosophical training that they recognise how tenuous their own grasp of the material may actually be. Moreover, if students are going to be competent members of a scholarly community, they must learn to write for a wide and varied audience. This means students must be encouraged to write, not for their instructor only, but for variety of readers, some hostile, uncharitable or lacking basic background knowledge. In order to promote greater mindfulness of their audience, I have begun including a specification of the target audience in my description of written assignments. In their first written assignment I have students target a naïve reader, a reader with basic philosophical knowledge in the second, and a knowledgeable but hostile reader in the third. Sample paper questions illustrating the preceding format are included in §4.1, below.

The preceding points are not only useful in promoting high quality philosophical work, but provides students with general tools they can employ in a wide range of academic and non-academic domains. This is as it should be since most of the students enrolled in a given philosophy class will not ultimately pursue full-time careers in philosophy. While, as a philosopher, I take myself to be particularly well positioned to encourage high quality analytical reading, thinking and writing, the skills I aim to impart to my students are ones that may be effectively applied in contexts far removed from the philosophy classroom.

#### *Specifications Grading*

One of the most distinctive features of my course design has been my implementation of the specifications grading system developed by Linda Nilson (2015). The grading system incorporates central insights from contemporary learning theory, according to which students learn best in a low-threat, interesting, and challenging environment. Assignments are designed to reflect student learning outcomes and they are graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Clear requirements for a satisfactory assignment are given, and an assignment that fails to meet those requirements will be marked as unsatisfactory. This means that a student's final grade is an accurate representation of which learning outcomes they have achieved and the extent to which they have achieved them. The system as a whole is designed to increase student motivation by giving them more control over the grade they get, and by only giving credit for work that satisfies the learning objectives of the particular assignment. The system is also designed to reduce stress in at least two ways: first, by clearly stating assignment criteria; and second, by allowing students to revise and resubmit a limited number of assignments (thus lowering the stakes of any individual assignment). Since I have begun implementing this grading methodology, I have found that the students are more motivated, attentive to assignment requirements, and produce overall higher quality work. An example of the specifications grading rubric can be found attached to the syllabus of my Ethics of Belief course, under the heading "How Your Grade is Determined".

## 2. CLASSES TAUGHT

**Ethics of Belief**, *George Washington University*, Spring 2018

A combined graduate and undergraduate seminar dedicated to investigating the question of when it is rationally or morally appropriate or inappropriate to adopt a belief. Enrolment: 8

**Introduction to Logic**, *George Washington University*, Spring 2018

An introduction to sentential, predicate, and first-order logic. Elective open to undergraduates. Enrolment: 50

**Advanced Philosophy of Mind**, *George Washington University*, Spring 2017

A graduate seminar on the rational significance of desire. Elective open to graduate students and undergraduates with permission of instructor. Enrolment: 7

**Mind, Brain, and Artificial Intelligence**, *George Washington University*, Fall 2016

An introductory to some of the central themes and thinkers in the philosophy of mind with an emphasis on artificial minds. Elective open to undergraduates. Enrolment: 24

**Analytic Philosophy**, *George Washington University*, Spring 2016

A survey course of central thinkers and ideas in early analytic philosophy and the application of these ideas to contemporary problems. Elective open to undergraduates. Enrolment: 8

**Theory of Knowledge**, *The George Washington University*, Spring 2016

Elective open to undergraduates with at least one prior philosophy course: an introduction to central questions in the theory of knowledge. Enrolment: 21

**Mind and Action**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Fall 2015

A graduate seminar offering an in-depth investigation of cognitivism about practical rationality and the rational significance of desire, featuring guest lectures by John Brunero, Kieran Setiya, and Nomy Arpaly. Enrolment: 7

**Formal Logic**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Spring 2015

Elective open to undergraduates: a basic introduction to sentential and first-order logic. Enrolment: 31

**Topics in Philosophy of Mind**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Spring 2015

Elective open to upper-level undergraduates: a careful examination of the concept of intentionality. Enrolment: 19

**Formal Logic**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Spring 2015

Elective open to undergraduates: a basic introduction to sentential and first-order logic.  
Enrolment: 36

**Epistemology**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Fall 2014

Elective open to upper-level undergraduates: an advanced introduction to central questions in the theory of knowledge. Enrolment: 16

**Desire and Intention**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Fall 2014

Graduate seminar: a survey of contemporary theories of desire and intention.  
Enrolment: 19

**Topics in Action Theory**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Spring 2014

Elective open to upper-level undergraduates: an advanced introduction to central questions in the theory of knowledge. Enrolment: 8

**Formal Logic**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Spring 2014

Elective open to undergraduates: a basic introduction to sentential and first-order logic.  
Enrolment: 23

**Epistemology**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Fall 2013

Elective open to upper-level undergraduates: an advanced introduction to central questions in the theory of knowledge. Enrolment: 10

**Formal Logic**, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*, Fall 2013

Elective open to undergraduates: a basic introduction to sentential and first-order logic.  
Enrolment: 22

**Theory of Knowledge**, *Carleton College*, Spring 2012

Elective open to upper-level undergraduate: an advanced introduction to central questions in the theory of knowledge. Enrolment: 6.

**Symbolic Logic**, *Carleton College*, Fall 2011

Elective open to upper-level undergraduates: an advanced introduction to classical sentential and first-order, predicate logic. Enrolment: 27.

# THE ETHICS OF BELIEF

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## Course Description

The “ethics of belief” refers to a cluster of questions having to do with when it is appropriate or inappropriate to adopt a belief. We will examine three sets of questions that fall under the umbrella of the ethics of belief. First, there is the question of whether our beliefs are under our voluntary control. Many theorists think they are not. However, if they’re right, then it seems inappropriate to criticize someone, as we often do, for having a certain belief. Second, is it ever rationally appropriate to believe something because doing so would benefit us in some way? For example, is it rationally appropriate to believe my spouse is faithful, despite abundant evidence to the contrary, because it would be emotionally distressing for me to believe otherwise? Third, can there be more than one way to rationally respond to a body of evidence? For example, if two individuals are presented with exactly the same evidence for and against climate change, but one believes and the other does not, does it follow that at least one of the individuals is being irrational? We will explore the above sets of questions by carefully examining the arguments of pairs of philosophers who take opposing stances on each issue.

## Prerequisites

Students should have some background in philosophy. Familiarity with epistemology and formal logic would be beneficial, but is not essential.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Explain why they think our beliefs are voluntary or involuntary and articulate at least one of the consequences of their view.
- Explain why they believe it is appropriate or inappropriate to believe something based on pragmatic grounds.
- Explain why they agree or disagree with the claim that people with exactly the same evidence should have exactly the same beliefs.
- Explain and defend a philosophical argument, position, or idea relevant to the course material via an oral presentation directed at an audience of their peers.
- Explain and defend a philosophical argument, position, or idea relevant to the course material in writing directed at an audience of their peers.

## Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined using a specification grading system (or “specs grading” for short). This grading system is designed to incorporate the most important insights from learning theory, according to which students learn best when they are interested and challenged in a low-stakes environment. See the document “How your grade is determined” distributed during the first day of class (and provided on Blackboard) for further details on how your grade in this class will be determined.

## Methodology

This class will primarily consist of the evaluation of *arguments*. Arguments consist of premises and conclusions, and the logical connection between the two. In setting out an argument, one follows several steps: First, one sets out the premises. Second, one defends those premises by giving reasons for thinking they are true, preferably reasons that are fairly uncontroversial (that is, reasons that could be accepted by parties on both sides of the debate). Third, one shows that these premises lead, logically, to a conclusion. A failure to complete any of these three steps results in a *failed* argument. In this class you will be reconstructing arguments (the premises, the reasons for premises, and the premises' logical connection to the conclusion) and critically evaluating arguments. In order to critically examine an argument, one must evaluate one of these three steps. E.g., you could show that a particular premise is implausible for a given reason; you could show that the defense of a given premise fails for a given reason; or you could show that the premises fail to logically connect to the conclusion. It is *not* a proper evaluation of an argument merely to *deny* the premises or the conclusion *without giving any reason for denying it*. Philosophy is the weighing and balancing of reasons. In order to outweigh an opponent's reason, one must give another reason in turn.

## Required Reading:

You have three main goals when reading assigned material: (1) **Identify** the main claims the author is arguing for ("What are the author's main conclusions?"); (2) **Understand** how the author argues for those claims ("What arguments does the author offer to support her/his main conclusions? How, exactly, are those arguments supposed to go?"); and (3) **Evaluate** the author's arguments ("How strong are the author's arguments for her/his main conclusions?"). I have included an essay by Jim Pryor entitled "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" in the "Course Readings" section of the course Blackboard website. As we begin our course, please have a look at this essay. The following reading schedule is tentative. As the class progresses, and I get a better sense of the needs and interests of the participants, I am likely to make changes to the reading schedule.

	Topic	Readings
Wk1	1. The Ethics of Belief I	Clifford, William "The Ethics of Belief"
	2. The Ethics of Belief II	James, William "The Will to Believe"
Wk2	3. Deciding to Believe I	Williams, Bernard "Deciding to Believe"
	4. Deciding to Believe II	Winters, Barbara "Believing at Will"
Wk3	5. The Truth Aim I	Velleman, David "On the Aim of Belief"

	6. The Truth Aim II	Rosen, Gideon "Does Belief Aim at the Truth?"
Wk4	7. For Evidentialism	Shah, Nishi "A New Argument for Evidentialism"
	8. Against Evidentialism	Rinard, Susanna "Against the New Evidentialists"
Wk5	9. For Pragmatism	Leary, Stephanie "In Defense of Practical Reasons for Belief."
	10. Against Pragmatism	Nolfi, Kate "Why Only Evidential Considerations Can Justify Belief"
Wk6	11. Pragmatic Encroachment I	Brown, Jessica "Knowledge and Practical Reason"
	12. Pragmatic Encroachment II	Stanley & Hawthorne "Knowledge and Action"
Wk7	13. Epistemic Permissivism I	Sharadin, Nathaniel "A Partial Defense of Permissivism"
	14. Epistemic Permissivism II	Schultheis, Ginger "Against Epistemic Permissivism"
Wk8	15. Irrelevant Influences I	Vavova, Ekaterina "Irrelevant Influences"
	16. Irrelevant Influences II	Schoenfield, "Permission to Believe"
Wk9	17. Epistemic Consequentialism I	Berker, Selim "The Rejection of Epistemic Consequentialism"
	18. Epistemic Consequentialism II	Ahlstrom-Vij & Dunn, "A Defence of Epistemic Consequentialism"
Wk10	19. Ideology I	Stanley, Jason. Selections from <i>How Propaganda Works</i> .
	20. Ideology II	Haslanger, Sally "Ideology Beyond Belief"
Wk11	21. Implicit Bias	Gendler, Tamar "Alief and Belief"
	22. Implicit Bias	Brownstein, Michael "Implicit Bias"
Wk12	23. Epistemic Injustice I	Fricker, Miranda "Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege"
	24. Epistemic Injustice II	Dotson, Kristie "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression"



# THE ETHICS OF BELIEF

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## HOW YOUR GRADE IS DETERMINED

### Specification Grading:

- This course uses an unconventional approach to assessing student learning called specifications grading. This grading system is designed to incorporate the most important insights from learning theory, which states that students learn best in a low-threat, interesting, and challenging environment. Several features of the system are worth highlighting:
- Assignments are designed to reflect student learning outcomes and they are graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Clear requirements for a satisfactory assignment will be given, and an assignment that fails to meet those requirements will be marked as unsatisfactory. What this means is that your final grade is an accurate representation of which learning outcomes you have achieved and the extent to which you have achieved them.
- The system as a whole is designed to increase your motivation by giving you more control over the grade you get, and by only giving credit for work that satisfies the learning objectives of the particular assignment.
- The system is also designed to reduce stress in at least two ways: first, by clearly stating assignment criteria; and second, by allowing you to revise and resubmit a limited number of assignments (thus lowering the stakes of any individual assignment).

### Grading Bundles:

***A Bundle*** – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of A:

1. Attend 12 or more full class periods;
2. Complete 10 satisfactory weekly reading reports;
3. Give 2 satisfactory scribe report;
4. Submit a draft of your term paper for peer review;
5. Give a satisfactory oral presentation of your term paper;
6. Give a satisfactory oral commentary on a peer's term paper;
7. Score 18 points or more on the final draft of your term paper.

***B Bundle* – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of B:**

1. Attend 10 or more full class periods;
2. Complete 8 satisfactory weekly reading reports;
3. Give 2 satisfactory scribe reports;
4. Submit a draft of your term paper for peer review;
5. Give a satisfactory oral presentation of your term paper;
6. Give a satisfactory oral commentary on a peer's term paper;
7. Score 16 points or more on the final draft of your term paper.

***C Bundle* – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of C:**

1. Attend 8 or more full class periods;
2. Complete 6 satisfactory weekly reading reports;
3. Give 1 satisfactory scribe report;
4. Submit a draft of your term paper for peer review;
5. Give a satisfactory oral presentation of your term paper;
6. Give a satisfactory oral commentary on a peer's term paper;
7. Score 14 points or more on the final draft of your term paper.

***D Bundle* – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of D:**

1. Attend 6 or more full class periods;
2. Complete 4 satisfactory weekly reading reports;
3. Give 1 satisfactory scribe report;
4. Submit a draft of your term paper for peer review;
5. Give an oral presentation of your term paper;
6. Give an oral commentary on a peer's term paper;
7. Score 12 points or more on the final draft of your term paper.

***F Bundle* – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of F:**

1. Complete at least one graded course assignment.

***Z Bundle* – Students who complete the following will earn a grade of Z:**

1. Complete no graded course assignments.

Modified grades of + and – will be used when a student's Satisfactory activities fall between the bundles. For instance, a student who met the requirements for the C Bundle, and who also submitted 8 satisfactory reading reports will get a C+, while a student who fell just short of the B Bundle requirements would likely receive a B– final grade.

### **Tokens and Flexibility**

Since every element of the course is assessed on an all-or-nothing basis, it might be stressful to strive for Satisfactory given that the stakes for not meeting that threshold

may be significant. To ease stress, to allow for flexibility—and most of all, to maximize opportunities for learning—every student starts the course with 3 virtual tokens that can be “exchanged” for some leniency or opportunities for revision. Using a token will allow a student to do one of the following:

- Eliminate an absence from their attendance record.
- Revise and resubmit one unsatisfactory assignment. (Note: tokens may be used once per assignment.)
- Redo an unsatisfactory oral argument reconstruction. (Note: tokens may be used once for this assignment.)
- Submit an assignment up to 48 hours late.

Professor Archer will track a student’s tokens throughout the semester. Exchanging tokens for absences will happen at the end of the term.

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## Assignment Specifications:

### Attendance

You will earn credit for attending a class period only if the following conditions are met:

1. You show up to class within five minutes of the starting time;
2. You sign your name on the attendance sheet;
3. You stay for the entire class period (e.g., you don’t leave during the break);
4. You adhere to the technology policy on the syllabus.

### Weekly Reading Reports

You will earn credit for turning in a reading response only if the following conditions are met:

1. Each report must answer the following four question prompts:
  - i. Before I read this text, the author assumed that I believed...[fill in].
  - ii. After I finished reading this text, the author wanted me to believe...[fill in].
  - iii. The author’s main argument in favour of the above conclusion is...[fill in].
  - iv. I find the author’s main argument convincing/unconvincing because...[fill in].

Reading reports will be graded as “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”. This requirement is meant to help prepare you to participate in class discussion, and strengthen your ability to clearly and concisely analyze, question, and/or object to the various arguments presented in the readings.

2. You email me your reading response by 11:59pm on the Tuesday BEFORE the reading is scheduled to be discussed in class. Responses submitted at 12am or later will automatically be graded 'Unsatisfactory', unless a token is used.
3. Your email should have the heading "My 1<sup>st</sup> Reading Report", "My 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading Report", "My 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading Report", etc., so that it is easy for me to keep track of how many reports you have completed.
4. Your reading response must be **250–350** words long. Word limits will be strictly enforced. Note: I will be evaluating the length of your response using the Google document word-count feature.

### **Class Scribe Reports**

You will earn credit for a satisfactory scribe report only if the following conditions are met:

1. You submit your scribe notes by 11:59pm on the Sunday following the class session for which you served as class scribe. NOTE: The email should have the heading "My Scribe Report", so that I don't confuse it with one of your weekly reading reports.
2. Your scribe notes should distil the class discussion down to approximately 3 or 4 questions, along with the answers we arrived at during our class discussion. You should compose your notes with the aim of giving a 3-5 minute synopsis of the previous class session at the beginning of the session in which you are giving your report.
3. The primary aims of this assignment is to assess your ability to identify what is most important in a class discussion and provide your fellow students with a brief reminder of what was covered during the previous session. Your scribe report will be deemed satisfactory only if it satisfies these aims.

### **Oral Term Paper Presentation**

You will earn credit for the oral presentation of your term paper only if the following conditions are met:

1. Your presentation is 7-10 minutes long.
2. Your presentation summarizes the main argument of your term paper.
3. Your presentation includes either slides OR a one-page handout.
4. You give a 3-5 minute reply to your peer commentator.

## **Oral Commentary on Peer Paper**

You will earn credit for your oral commentary on a peer paper only if the following conditions are met:

1. Your presentation is 5-7 minutes long.
2. You raise at least ONE objection to the peer paper's central argument **OR** offer at least ONE argument, example, or consideration in support of the peer paper's central thesis.

## **Term Paper**

You will earn credit for your short analysis and argument paper only if the following conditions are met:

1. You email a copy of the first draft of your term paper to me and your peer commentator by 11:59pm on Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>.
2. You email a copy of the final draft of your term paper to me by 11:59pm on Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup>.
3. Your paper addresses a relevant topic. For the purposes of this assignment, a topic is relevant if and only if it engages at least one of the readings on the syllabus. (If you have any doubts about whether your preferred topic is relevant, ask me beforehand so that there aren't any surprises come grading time.)
4. Your paper includes proper citations. Please feel free to use the same citation, footnote/endnote, and bibliographical format as that found in any of the papers we will be reading during the course.
5. Your paper is between 2,500 and 3,000 words long, including footnotes and bibliography.
6. Your paper is structured as either a positive paper, a critical paper, or a defensive paper. (See below for a description of each type.)
  - a. Every element of the chosen structure (see below) needs to be present in your paper.
  - b. It needs to be clear which parts of the paper correspond to which elements of the structure.
  - c. At least one key point needs to be original to you and reflect your perspective on the topic.

## Possible Paper Formats

### *A positive paper*

1. Introduction (Thesis: I will argue that X.)
2. Present the argument for X.
3. Show that the argument for X is valid **OR** say why you think it is cogent.
4. Say why you think each premise in the argument for X are true.
5. Respond to at least one objection to the argument for X.
6. Conclusion

### *A critical paper*

1. Introduction (Thesis: I will argue that so-and-so's argument for X fails.)
2. Present and explain so-and-so's argument for X.
3. Explain the defect in so-and-so's argument for X (invalid, false premise, or both).
4. Respond to at least one objection (either about your interpretation of the argument in 2, or your criticism of it in 3).
5. Conclusion

### *A defensive paper*

1. Introduction (Thesis: I will argue that so-and-so's criticism of X fails.)
  2. Explain X. (This could be an argument, a theory, or simply a claim.)
  3. Present and explain so-and-so's criticism of X.
  4. Argue that so-and-so's criticism of X is not a good criticism.
  5. Respond to at least one objection (either about your interpretation of the criticism in 3, or your rejection of the criticism in 4).
  6. Conclusion
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# THE ETHICS OF BELIEF

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## PAPER GRADING RUBRIC

Papers will be graded on a 20-point scale that includes 4 assessment areas: Grammar and Style, Organization, Exposition, and Philosophical Excellence. Each of the assessment areas contribute 5 points to the 20-point total.

**5 = outstanding // 4 = good= // 3 = average // 2 = below average // 1 = unusually poor**

### Grammar and Style

**5** Very few errors; very few awkward sentence constructions; language is mostly appropriate for this sort of paper; omits trite or banal remarks from introduction and elsewhere.

**4** Relatively few errors and awkward sentence constructions; or one of remaining “5 traits” missing.

**3** Moderate number of minor errors or awkward sentence constructions, but most sentences are intelligible.

**2** Significant number of minor errors or awkward sentence structures.

**1** Significant number of sentences are unintelligible.

### Organization

**5** Paper has a clear thesis statement; plan and structure of paper is clear; arguments and objections are well-organized; reader has, from the beginning, a clear sense of where the paper is going and most transitions are strong and well-motivated.

**4** Paper has at least partial thesis statement; arguments and objections are well-organized; plan and structure of paper is discernible but either not clearly laid out from the beginning or not appropriately signaled with strong transitions.

**3** Paper lacks a clear thesis statement, but arguments and objections are well-organized and the plan and structure of the paper is reasonably clear; or vice versa.

**2** Paper lacks a clear thesis statement, arguments are not particularly well-organized, it’s still possible for reader to keep track of where paper has been and where it is going.

**1** significant organizational problems make paper largely unintelligible.

## Exposition

**5** Paper demonstrates fully accurate understanding of the ideas of others; exposition includes all and only relevant details (i.e., there are no significant omissions; it doesn't read like a mere book report, etc.); arguments are presented with precision and clarity.

**4** Paper demonstrates mostly accurate understanding of the ideas of others; exposition includes most relevant details; arguments are presented clearly though perhaps not as precisely as they ought to be.

**3** Paper demonstrates reasonably accurate understanding of the ideas of others; exposition includes at least most *important* details, if not most of the *relevant* details; arguments are reasonably clear, though there is considerable room for improvement.

**2** Two of the following defects are present: (i) exposition reflects serious misunderstanding; (ii) exposition displays serious failures of clarity; or (iii) exposition omits some important details.

**1** All of the defects just mentioned are present.

## Philosophical Excellence

**5** Paper is on the right topic; author raises original and philosophically interesting, insightful, or creative points/arguments/objections; author's own views and arguments are developed and defended in clear and careful detail; author anticipates and addresses worthwhile objections or replies to his/her own views or offers substantial argument for all controversial premises.

**4** Paper is on the right topic; author raises philosophically interesting points/arguments/objections; author's own views are developed and defended in some detail (i.e. they are not merely sketched or briefly expressed in a final paragraph); either the author considers objections or replies to his/her own views or else the arguments are developed fully enough that failure in this regard can sensibly be overlooked.

**3** Paper is on the right topic; author raises weak, obvious, or otherwise problematic arguments or objections; author considers objections or replies to his/her own views or makes some other effort at defending controversial premises in his/her arguments.

**2** Paper is on the right topic; but author's objections reflect fundamental misunderstandings of the ideas/arguments of others, or offers little defense of his/her assertions and fails to consider objections/replies to his/her own views.

**1** Paper is on the wrong topic or otherwise completely fails to fulfill the assignment.



**The George Washington University  
Department of Philosophy**

## **Summary of Instructor Evaluations from Students**

**Instructor:** Archer

**Semester:** Spring **Year:** 2017

**Total Number of Pages:** 3

Compiled by: Hyehmi Nolan

Date: May 26, 2017

Instructions: Please rate your instructor and course using the following scale:

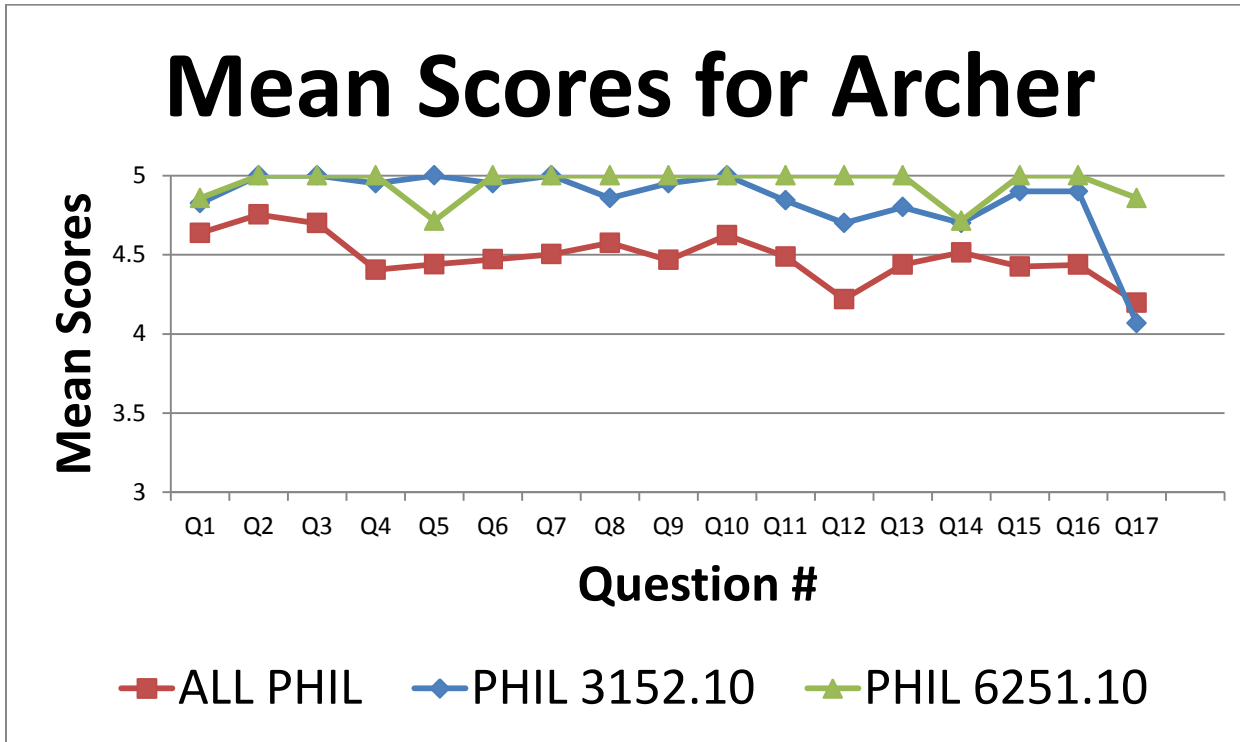
Please use this scale: 5-strongly agree 4- agree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 2 - disagree 1- strongly disagree

<b>Course Title</b>	Theory of Knowledge	Philosophy of Mind
<b>Course Number</b>	PHIL 3152.10	PHIL 6251.10
<b>Number of Evaluations Received</b>	20	7

Question	Mean	Median	St.Dev.	Mean	Median	St.Dev.
1. Instructor is able to convey his or her knowledge.	4.83	5.00	0.37	4.86	5.00	0.38
2. Instructor demonstrates a thorough command of the subject matter.	5.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	0.00
3. Instructor adheres to the subject matter.	5.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	0.00
4. Instructor made clear what was expected of students in the course.	4.95	5.00	0.22	5.00	5.00	0.00
5. Class time was well used to enhance student understanding of the subject matter.	5.00	5.00	0.00	4.71	5.00	0.49
6. Instructor encourages discussion concerning the subject matter and guides those discussions effectively.	4.95	5.00	0.22	5.00	5.00	0.00
7. Instructor is tolerant and undogmatic about the subject matter.	5.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	0.00
8. Instructor is helpful during office hours.	4.86	5.00	0.53	5.00	5.00	0.00
9. Reading materials and assignments were appropriate and useful.	4.95	5.00	0.22	5.00	5.00	0.00
10. Instructor is receptive to questions and comments from students.	5.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	0.00
11. Graded assignments (e.g., papers, exams, group projects) are well-designed for the purposes of the course.	4.84	5.00	0.50	5.00	5.00	0.00
12. Graded assignments are evaluated with comments that are clear and helpful.	4.70	5.00	0.57	5.00	5.00	0.00
13. Assignments are graded fairly.	4.80	5.00	0.52	5.00	5.00	0.00
14. The pace of the course is appropriate (neither too fast nor too slow).	4.70	5.00	0.47	4.71	5.00	0.00
15. The course was intellectually challenging and enhanced your appreciation for the subject matter.	4.90	5.00	0.31	5.00	5.00	0.00
16. This course has improved your ability to analyze and evaluate arguments and claims in a rigorous, sophisticated manner.	4.90	5.00	0.31	5.00	5.00	0.00
17. This course has improved your ability to write cogently argued philosophy papers.	4.07	5.00	1.22	4.86	5.00	0.38

**Departmental Statistics:**

This chart shows the mean response to each question for each of the instructor's courses against the means for ALL courses offered by the Department of Philosophy in the same semester.



**Written comments:**

(Transcribed exactly from handwritten comments)

**Course:** PHIL 3152.10

Archer is the absolute best. Please let him teach Action theory next spring!!!
CLICKERS DON'T(sic) HELP, HAVE PEOPLE RAISE THEIR HANDS
The clickers were helpful in testing our understanding of the material and also in guaging(sic) persuasiveness of a philosopher's argument
I really liked Prof Archer - he explained subject matter well and the course was well designed. In the future, it would have been useful to have a paper assigned to more deeply engage w/ subject matter. I understand the purpose of the clickers but I'm not sure they were that useful in a class this small.
Professor Archer was an amazingly interesting and grade-wise fair professor this spring. Much love.
Clicker was good
I thought the use of clicker surveys was very beneficial to me and useful for the class, serving as a comprehension check.
I liked this course a lot. One of my favorite philosophy classes. One area of improvement would be responsiveness to emails.
Archer is great but not good at responding to emails. Would be more helpful.
Clickers are fine

**Course:** PHIL 6251.10

Thank you!
Avery is a wonderful instructor

**The George Washington University  
Department of Philosophy**

## **Summary of Instructor Evaluations from Students**

**Instructor:** Adrian Acher

**Semester:** Fall **Year:** 2016

**Total Number of Pages:** 3

Compiled by: Hyehmi Nolan

Date: January 10, 2017

Instructions: Please rate your instructor and course using the following scale:

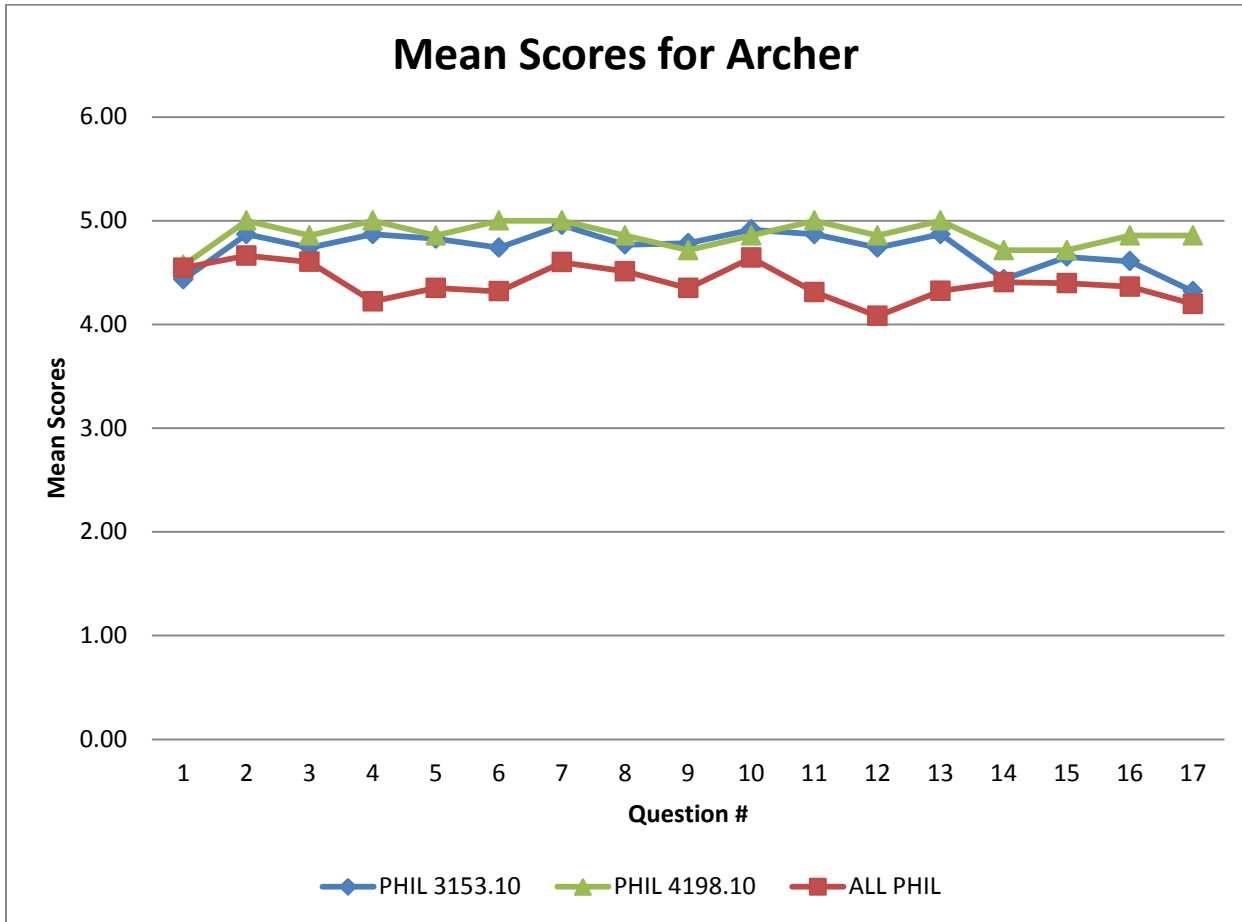
Please use this scale: 5-strongly agree 4- agree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 2 - disagree 1- strongly disagree

<b>Course Title</b>	Mind/Brain/Artificial Intelligence	Proseminar: Desire, Pleasure & Action
<b>Course Number</b>	PHIL 3153.10	PHIL 4198.10
<b>Number of Evaluations Received</b>	23	7

Question	Mean	Median	St.Dev.	Mean	Median	St.Dev.
1. Instructor is able to convey his or her knowledge.	4.43	4.00	0.51	4.57	5.00	0.53
2. Instructor demonstrates a thorough command of the subject matter.	4.87	5.00	0.34	5.00	5.00	0.00
3. Instructor adheres to the subject matter.	4.74	5.00	0.54	4.86	5.00	0.38
4. Instructor made clear what was expected of students in the course.	4.87	5.00	0.34	5.00	5.00	0.00
5. Class time was well used to enhance student understanding of the subject matter.	4.83	5.00	0.39	4.86	5.00	0.38
6. Instructor encourages discussion concerning the subject matter and guides those discussions effectively.	4.74	5.00	0.45	5.00	5.00	0.00
7. Instructor is tolerant and undogmatic about the subject matter.	4.96	5.00	0.21	5.00	5.00	0.00
8. Instructor is helpful during office hours.	4.77	5.00	0.60	4.86	5.00	0.38
9. Reading materials and assignments were appropriate and useful.	4.78	5.00	0.42	4.71	5.00	0.49
10. Instructor is receptive to questions and comments from students.	4.91	5.00	0.29	4.86	5.00	0.38
11. Graded assignments (e.g., papers, exams, group projects) are well-designed for the purposes of the course.	4.87	5.00	0.34	5.00	5.00	0.00
12. Graded assignments are evaluated with comments that are clear and helpful.	4.74	5.00	0.62	4.86	5.00	0.38
13. Assignments are graded fairly.	4.87	5.00	0.46	5.00	5.00	0.00
14. The pace of the course is appropriate (neither too fast nor too slow).	4.43	5.00	0.84	4.71	5.00	0.76
15. The course was intellectually challenging and enhanced your appreciation for the subject matter.	4.65	5.00	0.65	4.71	5.00	0.49
16. This course has improved your ability to analyze and evaluate arguments and claims in a rigorous, sophisticated manner.	4.61	5.00	0.58	4.86	5.00	0.38
17. This course has improved your ability to write cogently argued philosophy papers.	4.32	4.50	.78	4.86	5.00	0.38

**Departmental Statistics:**

This chart shows the mean response to each question for each of the instructor’s courses against the means for ALL courses offered by the Department of Philosophy in the same semester.



**Written comments:**

(Transcribed exactly from handwritten comments)

**Course:** PHIL 3153.10

Excellent Course, really well done. Only comment would be that at times it felt like it was going a little fast. It would be very helpful to draw stronger connections between each lecture (topic). Thanks!

Professor Archer is wonderful! This is my second semester taking a class with him, and it was just as good as the first. He is understand, though not too lenient, I wish I could take more classes with him!

Wish there was more focus on artificial intelligence.

Instructor spoke too fast. This is a difficult subject I wish he spoke more slowly and didn’t rely so heavily on the powerpoints.

**Course:** PHIL 4198.10

Swap the order of the debates: Broom, Brunero first; Chang, Dancy last (unsure of those words, the handwriting was atrocious)

I really liked the grading system in this class. It was the same amount of work without the usual stress/ This material was difficult + different from any other I have studied but Archer was very helpful in trying to explain all of it on a wider scope.