

Ryerson University
Department of Philosophy

PH 8106: Philosophy of Mind (Fall 2018)

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

This course will consider many central issues in the philosophy of mind by focussing on the special case of belief. We start by considering whether a person has **voluntary control** of what she believes and what might hang on such control. We then consider whether **everything possible is believable**. Next, we consider what a person **must** believe, and conclude by considering what a person **ought** to believe. A recurring theme will be that the limits to belief figure in both the objectivity and the subjectivity of belief.

Evaluation Scheme:

Grades will be determined in the following manner:

Task	Value	Due Date and Submission Information
Seminar Preps A 150-200 word exegesis on one of the readings for that week, <i>in advance of the class meeting</i> .	See below	Due at noon on seminar day. Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.
Mid-term Paper (1500-2000 words) I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric. This paper is purely exegetical.	40%	TBD Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.
Final Paper (2500-3000 words) I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric. This paper must develop and defend a position.	60%	TBD (probably December 10 th , 12:00pm) Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.

SEMINAR PREPS: You **must** hand in a seminar prep each week. If you hand in 5 or fewer, then you lose a full grade point on your final grade: e.g., from A to B. If you hand in 6-9, then you lose 1/3 grade point: e.g.,

from A to A-. You may only hand in ONE per week. I do not provide comments on them. Their entire purpose is to prove to me that you prepared for the seminar by carefully studying one of the readings.

Course Policies for PH 8104:

Late Penalty

- Assignments submitted late without sufficient justification will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day, including weekends.

Alternate Arrangements

- Students shall inform the instructor, in advance, when they will miss a deadline for (1) medical reasons; (2) compassionate reasons; or (3) reasons covered under Ryerson's policy concerning accommodation of student religious, aboriginal, and spiritual observance. When circumstances do not permit informing the instructor in advance (e.g. in an emergency), the student must inform the instructor as soon as possible. Students who fail to abide by this requirement will be assigned a late penalty. Alternate arrangements may include the setting of a make-up test or assignment; transferring the weight of a missed test or assignment to another test or assignment, or extending a deadline. Ryerson's policy concerning alternate arrangements for medical and compassionate reasons may be found at www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol134.pdf. Ryerson's policy concerning accommodation of student religious, aboriginal, and spiritual observance may be found at www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol150.pdf.
- (1) **Medical Considerations:** In order for alternate arrangements to be made on medical grounds, the student must supply the instructor with a *Ryerson Medical Certificate*, or a letter on letterhead from a physician with the student declaration portion of the *Ryerson Medical Certificate* attached. The *Ryerson Medical Certificate* may be found at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf.
- (2) **Compassionate Considerations:** In order for alternate arrangements to be made on compassionate grounds, the student must supply the instructor with documentation supporting the claim, where possible.
- (3) **Religious, Aboriginal, and Spiritual Observance:** Students are strongly encouraged to notify instructors of an observance accommodation issue within the first two weeks of classes. Requests for accommodation of observance can be made informally or formally to the instructor. Informal requests will be made verbally through private discussion or through an email between the student and instructor. For formal requests, student must submit a clear explanation of the observance and requested accommodation along with a copy of the Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance form, which may be found at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/relobservforminstr.pdf.
- Alternate arrangements will *only* be made on the basis of circumstances that are both (1) legitimate and (2) unforeseeable. Some examples of circumstances that typically fail to meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, multiple deadlines, and computer malfunctions.

Academic Misconduct

- For detailed information concerning academic misconduct and the relevant penalties, see Ryerson University's *Student Code of Academic Conduct* at www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf.

- Students should be aware that the instructor reserves the right to conduct an oral examination on the contents of any submitted assignment.

PH 8106: Provisional Schedule of Topics and Readings

All readings not linked on this syllabus will be posted on the D2L site for this course. Students are expected to bring the readings to class each week, in either paper or electronic form. The list of readings below may be revised as the course progresses, depending on the interests of the class and the pace of discussion.

Useful secondary/background literature:

- Schwitzgebel, Eric. [Belief](#). In Zalta, E. (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition).
- Engel, Pascal. Belief. Oxford Bibliographies online. (Ask me for a copy.)

The Nature of Believing

Sept. 6: Intro to course; Belief and the Cartesian legacy.

- Ryle, Gilbert. [The Concept of Mind](#). Chapter 1.

Sept. 13: 20th century causal and functionalist views.

- Armstrong, D. 1965. The causal theory of the mind. On D2L.
- Burge, Tyler. 1979. [Individualism and the Mental](#). In French, Uehling, and Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, IV, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 73–121.

Sept. 20: Dispositional views.

- Ryle, G. [The Concept of Mind](#). Chapter 5
- Kenny, A. (1989). [The Metaphysics of mind](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 5
 - Steward, H. 1997. [The Ontology of Mind](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 4.
 - Marcus, E. 2009. Why there are no token states. *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 34, 215-241.

Voluntarism and Belief

Sept. 27

- Williams, B. 1970. Deciding to Believe. In Keifer, H. and Munitz, M. (eds.) *Language, Belief and Metaphysics*. Albany: State University of New York. Reprinted in Williams, B. (1973). *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (On D2L)
- Jonathan Bennett. 1990. [Why Is Belief Involuntary?](#) *Analysis* 50: 93.

Oct. 4

- Hieronimy, P. 2009. [Believing at Will](#). *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume*.
- Setiya, K. 2008. [Believing at Will](#). *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 32.

Oct. 11 NO CLASSES

Norms of Belief

Oct 18 What a person ought to believe

- Feldman, R. 2000. [The Ethics of Belief](#). *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 60: 667-95.
- Thomson, J.J. 2008. *Normativity*. Chicago: Open Court. (Selections, handout)
 - Background reading: Hunter, D. (forthcoming). "Directives for Belief".

Oct 25 Rational belief and evidence

- Shah, N. 2006. [A New Argument for Evidentialism](#). *Philosophical Quarterly*, 56(225): 481-498.
- Steglich-Petersen, A. 2006. [No norm needed: on the aim of belief](#). *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 56(225).

Nov 1 Rational belief without evidence

- Marušić, B. 2015. *Evidence and Agency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Selections, Handout.
- McCormick, M. 2005. Compelled Belief. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 42(3) 157-169

Inference

Nov. 8 What is inference?

- Carroll, Lewis. TBD
- Stroud, Barry TBD

Nov. 15 Theoretical and Practical Inference (3 weeks)

- Thomson, J.J. 1962. [Practical Reasoning](#). *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 12(49) 316-328
- Broome, J. 2014. Normativity in reasoning. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 95(4), 622-633.
 - Secondary reading:
 - Hurka, T. 2006. Virtuous acts, virtuous dispositions. *Analysis* 66 (1): 69-76.
 - Boghossian, P. 2014. What is inference? *Philosophical Studies*, 169, 1-18.

Nov. 22 Rational causation

- Marcus, E. 2012. *Rational Causation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Chapter 1 (Handout)
- Boyle, M. 2009. [Active Belief](#). *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 35, 119-147.

Nov. 29 TBD