



PHL 131

Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics

S2 External 2014

Philosophy

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General Information

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

The unit introduces the big philosophical questions about human nature, personal identity and the meaning of life. What is the fundamental nature of reality? Are human beings somehow unique in nature? Do we have distinct selves that endure through time? What is the relation between our identity and the things that matter to us? We take a broadly historical approach, reading the classic philosophical texts as well as contemporary work. Three themes recur across the unit: the relation of mind and body, the quest for knowledge, and the nature of the self. We begin with conceptions of the mind at the dawn of the modern period, asking whether mind is entirely physical or could in principle survive bodily death. We also explore the links between the self, time, and memory. We then introduce some key thinkers of the twentieth century; and we explore their views on freedom, lived experience, and our relations to others. The unit as a whole offers a detailed introduction to controversial questions about the nature of the mind, showing how historical understanding animates current debates, and demonstrating the relevance of philosophy to live modern issues about science, human nature, and culture.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period (namely Descartes and Locke), at an introductory level.

You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.

You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.

You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.

You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.

You will be able to express your own ideas with improved clarity, and construct stronger arguments, than previously.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Introduction to philosophy</u>	10%	week 4
<u>Philosophical analysis</u>	20%	Week 5
<u>Short Analysis Portfolio</u>	25%	Week 9
<u>Case study: Responsibility</u>	35%	21/11/14
<u>Online discussion</u>	10%	On-going

Introduction to philosophy

Due: **week 4**

Weighting: **10%**

A short participation task, conducted in tutorials (online for external students), that introduces you to some of the key parts of studying philosophy. This will be drawn from the material delivered in weeks 1-3.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period (namely Descartes and Locke), at an introductory level.

Philosophical analysis

Due: **Week 5**

Weighting: **20%**

This assignment introduces the basics of philosophical analysis: critical reading, analysis of arguments, and defending your own opinion. You will analyse a text by, or concerning, René Descartes (1596-1650) on the nature of mind, knowledge, or the body. Your analysis will be assisted by structured questions. This assignment requires no additional reading.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period (namely Descartes and Locke), at an introductory level.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with improved clarity, and construct stronger

arguments, than previously.

Short Analysis Portfolio

Due: **Week 9**

Weighting: **25%**

This portfolio aims at you practising the recognition and discussion of philosophical texts. You will present a series of 6 discussions, drawn from the course content, in which you will refine your ability to recognise themes and problems in metaphysics and philosophy of mind, and practice your ability to summarise them. You will also be asked to provide a critical opinion on one or more topic.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.
- You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.

Case study: Responsibility

Due: **21/11/14**

Weighting: **35%**

In this assignment you will be placed in a role where you must write a briefing for a legal case concerning when an individual can be deemed responsible. You will analyse a series of documents including empirical case notes, police reports, media stories, and other relevant information. You will then provide a recommendation concerning the kind and level of responsibility for the case. This will require you to apply all of the knowledge and skills you have practiced through the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with improved clarity, and construct stronger arguments, than previously.

Online discussion

Due: **On-going**

Weighting: **10%**

Online students collaborate and discuss course topics with one another, and a tutor, through online forums. Your participation in these discussions will contribute to your overall assessment, just as an internal students' participation in a tutorial will contribute to theirs.

Online discussions will include discussion of material, debate, presenting and defending your own arguments, collaborating in philosophical analysis, giving and receiving feedback on your work and others', explaining and clarifying ideas, practising of philosophical skills, and more. The more you participate in these activities, the more likely you will do well in other assessments.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.

Delivery and Resources

Required Reading

The main content of the course will revolve around a book of readings (PHL131 Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics). This will be available from the Campus Bookstore. This contains all required reading.

Technology Used and Required

We use an iLearn website, and the Echo360 lecture recordings. Lecture notes and any other material you need will be available through the iLearn website. We recommend you have access to a reliable internet connection throughout semester.

Assignment Submission

Assignments in this course will be submitted electronically, as word documents. **There is no need for a coversheet** - the iLearn assignment submission (Turnitin) involves declaring your details and honesty in submitting your work. Please note, we do not accept submission by email attachment.

Extensions and Special Consideration

Requests for extensions must, normally, be made in writing before the due date. Extensions of up to 3 days can be granted by your tutor if reasonable grounds are given, and some written documentation can be produced. Work load from other units, or from employment, are not considered reasonable justification.

Requests for extensions of more than 3 days should be submitted via a [Disruption to Studies Request](#), which is available in the ask.mq.edu.au portal. Your request should be accompanied by appropriate documentation, such as a medical certificate. Please see the Disruption to Studies policy in the list of policies at the end of this document for further details.

Penalties for Late Submission

Late submissions of assignments will attract a penalty proportionate to the nature and timeliness of the work. All work must be submitted within 2 weeks of the assessment due date. Outside of this time, special circumstances must be proven to have interrupted your study.

Unit Schedule

PHL131 Unit Schedule S2, 2014

Week 1: General introduction

2: Descartes on what can be known

3: Descartes on the nature of the mind

4: Locke and Personal Identity

Assessment 1 (in-class)

5: Personal Identity - Do I survive?

Assessment 2 (Philosophical Analysis)

6 Identity and Bodies

7: Identity: Multiple Personality

~ Mid Semester Break ~

8: Free Will and Determinism

9: Free Will and Making Choices

Assessment 3 (Portfolio of short analyses)

10: Responsibility and Memory

11: Responsibility and Narrating our own lives

12: Case studies in Responsibility

13: Neuro-law Case Study

In the first week of exams: Assessment 4 (Case study)

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with improved clarity, and construct stronger arguments, than previously.

Assessment task

- Case study: Responsibility

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- You will understand the nature of mind and self using foundational philosophical ideas from the Early Modern period (namely Descartes and Locke), at an introductory level.
- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.

Assessment task

- Introduction to philosophy

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- You will understand contemporary debates about the metaphysics of personal identity, at an introductory level.
- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.

Assessment tasks

- Philosophical analysis
- Short Analysis Portfolio
- Online discussion

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Case study: Responsibility

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- You will possess basic skills in philosophical analysis.
- You will be able to respond to some common theories of mind and personhood in a reflective and critical way.
- You will be able to express your own ideas with improved clarity, and construct stronger arguments, than previously.

Assessment tasks

- Philosophical analysis
- Short Analysis Portfolio
- Case study: Responsibility
- Online discussion

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- You will understand, in an applied way, what some contemporary philosophical research tells us about abilities that are needed in order for one to be considered a "responsible" person - for example, in a legal scenario.

Assessment task

- Case study: Responsibility

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment tasks

- Case study: Responsibility
- Online discussion

Changes from Previous Offering

- We have reduced the number of written assessments - We have changed the final assessment from an essay to a case study - We have introduced a small first assessment - We have changed the list of readings