

PHIL 131: Topics in Metaphysics
Spring 2012; Professor David O. Brink
Syllabus

This is a somewhat tentative Syllabus, inasmuch as I may add or subtract topics and readings, at the margins, depending on our progress, student interests, and new material I discover along the way. So it's important to keep abreast of any changes in the Syllabus, which I will also announce in class. Readings are divided into two groups: (A) required and (B) recommended. As the labels suggest, required readings are mandatory, whereas recommended readings are for those who would like to pursue required readings and topics further. Any required readings not included in one of the two required texts, will be available through Electronic Reserve. Do the readings in the order in which they are listed. If you are having trouble accessing a recommended reading, let me know, and I may be able to help (e.g. lend you a copy). Further publication details for the items listed on the Syllabus can be found on the Bibliography.

0. General Background

- (B) Noonan, *Personal Identity*; Sydney Shoemaker, "Personal Identity: A Materialist's Account;" Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, ch. 1; David Shoemaker, "Personal Identity and Ethics."

I. PERSONS AND THEIR PERSISTENCE

1. Persons and Personal Identity: Preliminaries

- (A) Locke in *Personal Identity*, ed. J. Perry; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 10.
- (B) Noonan, *Personal Identity*, ch. 1; Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

2. Locke and His Critics

- (A) Locke in *Personal Identity*; Butler, Reid, and Hume in *Personal Identity*; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, §§78-81.
- (B) Noonan, *Personal Identity*, chs. 2-4.

3. Parfit on Psychological Reductionism

- (A) Williams, "The Self and the Future" in *Personal Identity*; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 11.
- (B) Noonan, *Personal Identity*, chs. 5-11.

4. Parfit on What Matters

- (A) Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chs 12-13; Nagel, "Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness" in *Personal Identity*.
- (B) Lewis, "Survival and Identity;" Sosa, "Survival Matters."

5. Loose Ends and Alternatives

- (B) Animalism [Olson, *The Human Animal*, selections]; the narrative conception of the self [Schechtman, "The Narrative Self"]; Buddhist eliminativism [Siderits,

“Buddhist Non-Self: the No-Owner’s Manual”]; and/or pathologies [Radden, “Multiple Selves” and Hobson, “Autism and the Self”].

II. THE NORMATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONS

6. Reductionism and Special Concern

- (A) Review Butler; Perry, “The Importance of Being Identical” [ER]; Whiting, “Friends and Future Selves” [ER].

7. Reductionism and Prudence

- (A) Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chs. 7 and 14; Brink, “Rational Egoism and the Separateness of Persons” [ER] and “Prudence and Authenticity: Intrapersonal Conflicts of Values” [ER].
- (B) Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 418-19; Johnston, “Human Concerns without Superlative Selves”

8. Reductionism and Distributive Justice

- (A) Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 15; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§5-6 [ER].
- (B) Jeske, “Persons, Compensation, and Utilitarianism.”

9. Reductionism and Responsibility

- (A) Pummer, “Division and Desert” [ER].

10. Self & Others

- (A) Brink, “Self-Love and Altruism” [ER].
- (B) Whiting, “Impersonal Friends.”