

PHIL 131: Topics in Metaphysics
Winter 2017; Professor David O. Brink
Topic: Persons & Values
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 intended for those who would like to pursue required readings and topics further. Many required readings come from the two required texts.

- *Personal Identity*, 2d. ed., ed. John Perry (University of California Press, 2008).
- Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford University Press, 1984).

Any required readings not included in one of the two required texts will be posted on the course website [TED]. Do the readings in the order in which they are listed. Though we will progress through the topics and readings in the order in which they are listed, I have not put dates into the Syllabus, because I want our pace to be determined by our actual rate of progress, rather some predetermined timetable. I will issue regular reminders about where we are in the Syllabus (remind me if I don't). If you are having trouble accessing a recommended reading, let me know, and I may be able to help. Further publication details for the items listed on the Syllabus can be found on the Bibliography.

1. Introduction and Overview

- (A) *Existential Comics* <<http://existentialcomics.com/comic/1>>.
- (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

2. 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."

3. Locke and His Critics

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

4. 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.

5. 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;" Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, ch. 1.

II. THE NORMATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF PERSONS

6. Reductionism and Special Concern

- (A) Butler (again); Perry, "The Importance of Being Identical" [TED]; Whiting, "Friends and Future Selves" [TED].

7. Reductionism, Rationality, and Prudence

- (A) Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chs. 7 and 14; Brink, "Rational Egoism and the Separateness of Persons" [TED] and "Prudence and Authenticity: Intrapersonal Conflicts of Values" [TED].
- (B) Mill, *On Liberty*, esp. Chapter I; Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, pp. 418-19; Johnston, "Human Concerns without Superlative Selves."

8. Reductionism, Morality, and Distributive Justice

- (A) Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 15; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§5-6 [TED]; Jeske, "Persons, Compensation, and Utilitarianism" [TED].
- (B) Pummer, "Does Fission Multiply Desert?"

9. Self & Others

- (A) Plato, *Symposium* 199c-212c [TED] and Brink, "Self-Love and Altruism" [TED].
- (B) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, books viii-ix; Whiting, "Impersonal Friends."

III. PHILOSOPHICAL METHODOLOGY: METAPHYSICS, ETHICS, AND EXPLANATORY PRIORITY

- (A) Brink, "Special Concern and Personal Identity" [TED].