

## Philosophy of Memory

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### Lectures and Office Hours

*Lectures:* Monday and Wednesday, 12:00–3:00pm (Instructional Centre IB 240)

*Office Hours:* Immediately after lecture (Annex 123)

### Course Overview

#### Course Description

Memory is central to human life. For better or worse, memory keeps our childhoods with us, shaping who we are and how we view ourselves. Memory gives us access to innumerable facts: the names of recent Prime Ministers, the capital of Ontario, Plato's vocation, etc. Without memory, we would be doomed to repeat our mistakes, unable to follow through on our promises and projects, and incapable of taking responsibility for our sins and successes. This course explores the nature of memory and its philosophical significance, and breaks down into three topics. *Part 1: What is Memory* contrasts experiential and causal theories of memory, testing them against both philosophical and empirical evidence. We will also ask whether memories extend into external objects such as smartphones. What we learn about memory in *Part 1* will inform our discussions of the broader philosophical significance of memory throughout the course. *Part 2: Memory and Knowledge* asks whether we should dogmatically accept that our memories are true, especially in light of psychological research on the reconstructive nature of memory. *Part 3: Memory and Personhood* examines whether memory is required to remain the same person over time. We will discuss classic answers to this question, as well as complications that arise when we discuss outlandish thought experiments, empirical evidence for reconstructive memories, and the memories of children as well as non-human animals.

#### Disclaimer

Summer courses in philosophy are *hard*. This course is no exception to the rule. It will be fast paced: for example, your first assignment is due next Friday. Readings are plentiful, and they often discuss advanced philosophical issues. We'll also discuss empirical results from the psychology of memory, so you'll have to grapple with difficult questions about how science bears on philosophy (and vice versa). Furthermore, you'll be expected to participate in frequent class activities. That said, you'll also gain a lot from the course.

## Course Objectives

This course will introduce you to an important and underrepresented philosophical topic—memory. Perhaps more importantly, it will help you develop skills that are applicable in your other courses and everyday life:

- How to read, interpret, and engage with difficult texts
- How to extract and engage with another person’s argument in conversation and writing while being rigorous yet charitable
- How to generate, develop, and present original ideas
- How to weave together science and the humanities (no prior scientific background is expected; relevant scientific concepts will be explained in lecture)

## Course Schedule

*Class 1 (Monday May 9): Introduction and Background*

No readings

**Argument Response 1 Posted to Blackboard!**

### Part 1: What is Memory?

*Class 2 (Wednesday May 11): Stative Theories of Memory*

Hume (1739) *Treatise on Human Nature* Book 1, Part 1, Sections 1 and 3 (8 pages)

Russell (1921) *Analysis of Mind* “Lecture IX: Memory” (31 pages)

*Class 3 (Monday May 16): Causal Theories of Memory*

Martin and Max Deutscher (1966) “Remembering” (38 pages)

Loftus (2003) “Make Believe Memories” (6 pages)

*Class 4 (Wednesday May 18): Is Your Memory in Your Smartphone?*

Clark and Chalmers (1966) “The Extended Mind” (14 pages)

Adams and Aizawa (2001) “The Bounds of Cognition” (22 pages)

**Argument Response 1 Due Friday May 20th at 11:59pm!!**

**Argument Response 2 Posted to Blackboard**

*Victoria Day (Monday May 23)*

Holiday, no class.

## Part 2: Memory and Knowledge

### *Class 5 (Wednesday May 25): Dogmatism*

Burge (1993) “Content Preservation” (33 pages)

Pryor (2000) “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist” (33 pages)

### *Class 6 (Monday May 30): Reconstructive Memories and Skepticism*

Matthen (2010) “Is Memory Preservation?” (12 pages)

Siegel (2012) “Cognitive Penetrability and Perceptual Justification” (22 pages)

### *Class 7 (Wednesday June 1): Is Memory Testimony from a Past Self?*

Barnett (2015) “Is Memory Merely Testimony from a Past Self?” (40 pages)

Wegner and Ward (2013) “How the Web Affects Memory” <http://harvardmagazine.com/2011/11/how-the-web-affects-memory>

**Argument Response 2 Due Friday June 3 at 11:59pm!!**

**Final Paper Topics Posted to Blackboard**

## Part 3: Memory and Persons

### *Class 8 (June 6): Personal Identity and the “Memory Theory”*

Locke (1690). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* “Chapter 27: Of Identity and Diversity” (21 pages)

Reid “Of Mr. Locke’s Account of Our Personal Identity” (6 pages)

**Last day to drop course from Academic Record and GPA**

### *Class 9 (June 8): Fusion, Fission, and Survival*

Parfit (1970) “Personal Identity” (24 pages)

### *Class 10 (June 13): What About Memory Grounds Identity?*

Schechtman (1994) “The Truth About Memory” (16 pages)

Klein and Nichols (2012) “Memory and the Sense of Personal Identity” (26 pages)

### *Class 11 (June 15): Memory and Personhood in Children and Animals*

Varner (2008) “Personhood, Memory, and Elephant Management”

Gopnik (2009) “Who Am I? Memory, Self, and the Babbling Stream” (30 pages)

**Final Papers Due Sunday June 19 at 11:59pm!!**

### *Class 12 (June 20): Review*

No readings

# Practicalities

## Requirements

1. Regular attendance and participation. 13%. Attendance sheets will be passed around at the start of each class.
2. Argument Response 1 (600 words). 13% **Due Friday May 20th at 11:59pm.**
3. Argument Response 2 (600 words). 13% **Due Friday June 3rd at 11:59pm.**
4. Final Paper (Maximum 1200 words). 26% **Due Sunday June 19th at 11:59pm.**
5. Final exam (2 hours, covering the entire course). 35%

You must upload your written work via the course website by midnight on the due date. Links and instructions will be provided prior to each assignment. Note that your first assignment is already posted. Get started right away!

## Course Website

The course website should be your primary resource for course business, including readings, announcements, assignments, online exercises, and the syllabus. To access the website, go to <https://portal.utoronto.ca>, click the “Login to the Portal” button on the left hand side of the page, and login with your UTORid and password. Once you log in, PHL340 should be listed under “my courses” on the upper right hand side of the page.

**Assignments will be posted on Portal under Course Materials/Assignments, but must be submitted through UTORsubmit.** Papers must be submitted as either Microsoft Word files or pdfs. Submit papers by logging on to <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/submit> with your UTORid and password. More detailed instructions on how to use UTORsubmit can be found here:

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/iits/sites/files/iits/public/shared/UTORSubmit%20for%20Students.pdf>

## Course Readings

All readings will be made available through the course website, either in the form of links or PDFs. To access the readings, go to Course Materials/Readings and Handouts, and then navigate to the current class. Handouts will also be available in the folder for that day.

**Writing:** Writing philosophy papers is a skill that takes years of diligent work to develop. But if you make the investment, your ability to write will stay with you throughout your life. Fortunately, many resources are available to help:

1. Start with my handout, “How to Write a Philosophy Paper”, available on the blackboard site for this course. Since this handout is intended to help you write full essays (rather than argument responses), I will post it prior to your essay.
2. Typically, the UTM Philosophy Essay Clinic <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/iframe/philosophy> is a great resource. Unfortunately, the clinic is closed for the summer session. You can

instead get help from the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre  
<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/our-mission-0>.

3. I am happy to discuss your plans for the essay in office hours prior to the due date, and to elaborate on my essay feedback in person during office hours. This sort of one-on-one feedback is one of the best ways to improve.
4. Pryor's excellent (though longer) guide to writing in philosophy is available here:  
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
5. Additional guides on the UTM Philosophy Department website:  
<http://undergraduate.philosophy.utoronto.ca/advice-for-writing-in-philosophy/>

**Participation:** There will be no TA for this course. Because of this, your participation mark will be determined by your questions during lecture as well as your participation in up to three types of class discussions (see below).

I recognize that participation marks can unfairly disadvantage certain students: for example, introverts and those with anxiety about public speaking. That being said, I would be remiss as a philosophy professor if I didn't teach you how to rationally communicate. To balance between these aims, I will provide diverse opportunities to participate:

1. Breakout Sessions. You will split off into small groups and discuss a provided question or topic (I will move between groups). Afterwards, we will discuss this question or topic as a class.
2. Group Discussions. We will have more open ended group discussions that mimic the structure of a typical tutorial.
3. Online Exercises (Optional). After a few lectures, I will post questions in the discussion board for the course website. These questions will follow up on an issue we've discussed in class and/or breakout sessions. It is by no means mandatory to participate in this online forum. Rather, view these as an optional opportunity to demonstrate that you're engaged in the class and develop your communication abilities, in a forum that does not depend upon public speaking.

If you have a legitimate reason to be absent from class, please email me within 24 hours of class so that I can record your attendance.

## Email Policy

The following guidelines apply to email communication during this course:

- Use [zac.irving@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:zac.irving@mail.utoronto.ca) for all course-related questions
- I will make every effort to reply to legitimate email inquiries within 48 hours during weekdays. **If I have not responded by 48 hours, email again, but do not send me another email before 48 hours!**
- Before you email, check to ensure that you can't find the answer to your question on the syllabus. Long, substantive questions should also be reserved for class discussions or office hours. As a general rule, you shouldn't email about questions that take more than a couple sentences to ask or answer. If your question is too long, I'll tell you to ask it in office hours or class discussion.
- In the subject line of each email, include the course identifier and a clear statement of

purpose (e.g., PHL340 Question about Term Paper); otherwise, your message may be deleted along with spam.

## General Policies

- **Late Papers** will be marked down at a rate of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade per day, to a maximum of six days. Beyond this, you must seek an extension or receive a 0.
- **Extensions** will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances include illness with a medical note, a disability that has been documented with accessibility services, or undue hardship determined by a councillor (or if you would prefer, in consultation with me). That said, I've seen students undergo hardship when they could have availed themselves of university services. If personal circumstances are interfering with your performance in this course, talk to someone (e.g. accessibility services or a councillor).
- **Accessibility Services** If you require accommodation due to a disability, contact UTM's AccessAbility Resource Centre (2037 Davis Building). Information is available on the website: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessability/>. If you have not re-registered with your accessibility advisor for the summer session, you should do so now. To schedule a re-registration appointment with your AccessAbility Advisor please call 905-569-4699, email [access.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:access.utm@utoronto.ca) or stop by Room 2037, Davis Building. **The deadline to request accommodations for the June 2016 exam period is June 8, 2016.**
- **Mental Health and Counselling** UTM's Health and Counselling Centre (HCC) is a valuable resource for students with short-term and chronic mental health issues. HCC clinicians offer short-term, solution-focused counselling and therapy services, and the Centre provides referrals to assist students in accessing resources in the community when complex and/or long-term care is needed. If you are suffering or struggling, you're not alone, and the university is here to help. To schedule an appointment, contact HCC over the phone (905-828-5255), email ([health.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:health.utm@utoronto.ca)), or in person (Room 1123A, Davis Building).
- **Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct:** The University of Toronto takes plagiarism (and academic misconduct more generally) very seriously. For a complete statement of the policies governing academic conduct, see the University's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, and also for knowing the particular plagiarism penalties. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) the use of a thinker's ideas or words without proper citation; the purchase of assignments; the use of internet resources without proper citation; and the submission of work written (in whole or in part) by another. Penalties for plagiarism range from a zero on the assignment to suspension from the University of Toronto. Furthermore, I will be grading your papers and have caught many plagiarists. If you cheat, I won't like catching you, but I will. So don't do it.