

Time: Tu/Th 3:30-4:50pm  
Location: Sequoyah Hall 148  
Office Hours: Tu/Th 5-6pm

Instructor: Charles T. Sebens  
Email: csebens@gmail.com  
Office: 8047 HSS

---

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

---

This course will focus on four big questions: What is science? Are science and religion compatible? What is good? Why be moral? We will address the first question by looking at philosophical ideas about what makes science special as well as historical and contemporary debates about the nature of science. In tackling the relationship between science and religion, we will examine how science bears on the evidence we have for the existence of god and whether evidence is needed in what is arguably a matter of faith. The next big question has two parts. We are asking both what is morally good and what is good for a person. We will see that in utilitarianism these two questions are closely linked: it is morally good to do what brings the most good to the greatest number. The final question asks why we should do that which is morally good. We will look at historical answers to this question and how the debate is affected by the idea that our desire to help others is a product of our evolutionary past. Throughout the course we will be drawing connections between philosophy and the sciences, especially contemporary physics, positive psychology, welfare economics, and, most centrally, evolutionary biology.

---

## ASSIGNMENTS

---

### **Short Essays** (92%, 23% each)

You will write one short essay on each of our four big questions. Each essay should be between 1,000 and 1,400 words. A hard copy must be submitted in class and an electronic copy submitted through the course website. You will receive further guidance on the essays in class on 4/13.

### **Peer Review** (8%)

On 4/18 you must bring four printed drafts of your first essay for peer-review. In class you will complete worksheets to provide feedback on your fellow students' essays. Of the 8% of your final grade which comes from the peer review, 4% will be for having four copies of a *complete* draft of your essay (nothing left in outline form, within the word limits, etc.) and 4% will be for giving satisfactory feedback to your peers.

---

## READINGS

---

There is no textbook for this course. All readings are available on the course website.

It is important that you do the required readings in advance of the class for which they are listed. You will get more out of lecture if you come to class prepared.

Optional readings are provided so that you have a place to go if you want to delve deeper into a certain topic or to get a different perspective. You do not need to read them as we go, but they will

be useful resources when you are working on your essays. Lectures will generally include topics that are not discussed in the required reading. The optional readings are a good place to look for discussion of those topics.

Much of the time you spend learning philosophy will be spent reading and re-reading the texts. Reading philosophy is challenging. I recommend that you re-read confusing parts of the text and take notes, bringing prepared questions with you to class or office hours.

## ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

---

It will be very difficult to do well in this course if you do not attend class consistently. Writing strong essays requires understanding the material thoroughly and developing your own ideas and arguments. If you try to teach yourself from the readings, you will miss out on the opportunity to have any misunderstandings corrected and to practice thinking like a philosopher by discussing your ideas in class. Also, the different lectures are more closely connected than it might appear and missing one will make others more difficult to understand.

Engaged participation is important to your success in this course. Learning to raise questions and present your own ideas in a skilled, accurate, professional, and persuasive manner is an invaluable skill in life. By engaging in class discussion you will improve your ability to do this and come to understand the material covered in the course better.

During discussion you will often find yourself disagreeing with other students. When this happens, strive to be respectful. If you can't understand why someone would believe *that*, then you have something to learn from your interlocutor. The most compelling arguments are offered by those who see the appeal of the other side.

## SCHEDULE

---

[Note chapters, sections, and page numbers! Sometimes you don't have to read the whole thing.]

### UNIT I: WHAT IS SCIENCE?

#### 4/4 **Galileo, Bacon, and the Scientific Method**

Reading: None

Optional: *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* (1632), Galilei (selections from the 2<sup>nd</sup> day)  
*Novum Organum Scientiarum* (1620), Bacon, Book One, Aphorisms 38-68, Book Two, Aphorisms 10-20

#### 4/6 **Deduction and Induction**

Reading: *Understanding Philosophy of Science* (2002), Ladyman, Introduction and Chapter 1: Induction and Inductivism

Optional: *What Is This Thing Called Science?* (1976), Chalmers, Chapter 1: Inductivism: Science as Knowledge Derived from the Facts of Experience

*Understanding Philosophy of Science* (2002), Ladyman, Chapter 2: The Problem of Induction and Other Problems with Inductivism

4/11 **Falsificationism**

Reading: *The Character of Physical Law* (1965), Feynman, Chapter 7: Seeking New Laws, pg. 156-159

*Theory and Reality* (2003), Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 4: Popper: Conjecture and Refutation

Optional: *Understanding Philosophy of Science* (2002), Ladyman, Chapter 3: Falsificationism

*What Is This Thing Called Science?* (1976), Chalmers, Chapter 6: The Limitations of Falsificationism, Sections 4 and 5

*Scientific Reasoning: The Bayesian Approach* (1989), Howson and Urbach, Chapter 5: Fisher's Theory

❖ **Unit I essay topics distributed.** ❖4/13 **Contemporary Debates of Demarcation / Tips on Writing the Essays**

Reading: "Science and Pseudoscience: The Difference in Practice and the Difference It Makes" (2013), Shermer

Optional: "A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper" (2008), Rippon

*Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophical Essays* (2006), Chapter 3: Rules of Style and Content for Philosophical Writing, Vaughn

"What Scientific Idea is Ready for Retirement? Falsifiability" (2014), Carroll

"Scientific Method: Defend the Integrity of Physics" (2014), Ellis and Silk

4/18 **Peer Review**

Reading: None

❖ **Bring four copies of unit I essay draft for peer review.** ❖

## UNIT II: ARE SCIENCE AND RELIGION COMPATIBLE?

4/20 **The Argument from Design**

Reading: "The Argument from Design" (1800), Paley, from *Natural Theology*

Optional: "Darwin and Paley Meet the Invisible Hand" (1990), Gould

*The God Delusion* (2006), Dawkins, Chapter 4: Why There Almost Certainly is No God

❖ **Unit I essay due.** ❖4/25 **The Fine-Tuning Argument**

Reading: "The Fine-Tuning Argument" (2009), Manson

Optional: "The Design Argument" (2004), Sober

"Argument from the Fine-Tuning of the Universe" (1989), Swinburne

*Dreams of a Final Theory* (1992), Weinberg, Chapter 11: What about God?

4/27 **Compatibility and Conflict Between Science and Religion**

Reading: *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (2006), Collins, Chapter 6: Genesis, Galileo, and Darwin and Chapter 10: Option 4: BioLogos (Science and Faith in Harmony)

Optional: *Reason and Religious Belief* (2009), 4<sup>th</sup> ed, Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, Chapter 13: Religion and Science: Compatible or Incompatible?  
*Science and Religion: Are They Compatible?* (2011), Dennett and Plantinga, Chapters 1 and 2

5/2 **Faith and Reason**

Reading: *Reason and Religious Belief* (2009), 4<sup>th</sup> ed, Peterson, Hasker, Reichenbach, and Basinger, Chapter 4: Faith and Reason: How are they Related?

Optional: "Is there a God?" (1952), Russell, pg. 547-548

"Can it be Rational to have Faith?" (2012), Buchak

❖ **Unit II essay topics distributed.** ❖

5/4 **The Problem of Evil**

Reading: "Why God Allows Evil" (1996), Swinburne

Optional: "Evil and Omnipotence" (1955), Mackie

UNIT III: WHAT IS GOOD?

5/9 **The Euthyphro Dilemma / Reading a Text Closely**

Reading: *Euthyphro* (~400 BCE), Plato

Optional: "God and Objective Morality: A Debate" (2004), Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, from *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*

"God and Morality" (2008), Swinburne

*The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), Paley, Book 2: Moral Obligation, Chapters 1-5

"Appendix: Reading Philosophy" (2013), Perry and Bratman, in *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pg. 841-843

5/11 **Doing Good: Utilitarianism**

Reading: *Utilitarianism* (1863), Mill, Chapter 1: General Remarks and Chapter 2: What Utilitarianism Is

Optional: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1993), Rachels, Chapter 8: The Debate over Utilitarianism

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (1973), Le Guin

"Interpersonal Comparisons of Utility: A Comment" (1938), Robbins

❖ **Unit II essay due.** ❖

5/16 **Well-Being: Hedonism, Desire Satisfaction, and Objective Lists**

Reading: "Logic of Decision" (2011), Weatherson, Chapter 5: Utility

Optional: *Normative Ethics* (1998), Kagan, Chapter 2: The Good, Sections 1-3

*On Final Ends* (45 BCE), Cicero (selections)

"The Experience Machine" (1974), Nozick, from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

- 5/18 **Comparing and Contrasting Hedonism with Desire Satisfaction**  
 Reading: “Desire Satisfaction and Hedonism” (2006), Heathwood  
 ❖Unit III essay topics distributed.❖
- 5/23 **What’s Actually Good and Why that Actually Matters: Well-Being in Psychology and Economics**  
 Reading: *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (2011), Seligman, pg. 11-29, 221-228, 237-241  
 Optional: “Norway Is No. 1 in Happiness. The U.S., Sadly, Is No. 14.” (2017), Chokshi  
*World Happiness Report* (2017), Chapter 2: The Social Foundations of World Happiness, Helliwell, Huang, and Wang, pg. 10-13  
*OECD Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* (2013), OECD, Chapter 1: Concept and Validity, pg. 28-43  
 “Well-Being and Economics” (2015), Angner
- UNIT IV: WHY BE MORAL?
- 5/25 **Categorical Imperatives**  
 Reading: *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1993), Rachels, Chapter 9: Are There Absolute Moral Rules?  
 Optional: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Section 2: Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant, pg. 30-33, 37-44  
*Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977), Chapter 1: The Subjectivity of Values, Mackie, Sections 6-12
- 5/30 **The Moral Conscience and its Cultivation**  
 Reading: *Mencius* (~300 BCE), Mèngzǐ (孟子), 2A.6, 6A.1-6A.3, 6A.6-6A.8  
*Utilitarianism* (1863), Mill, Chapter 3: Of the Ultimate Sanction of the Principle of Utility  
 Optional: *Mengzi (Mencius) on Human Nature*, Walker [video, 8 min.]  
 “Mencius” (2014), Van Norden, Section 3 (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)  
 ❖Unit III essay due.❖
- 6/1 **The Evolutionary Origin of that Moral Conscience**  
 Reading: *The Meaning of Human Existence* (2014), E.O. Wilson, Chapters 2, 3, and 6  
 Optional: *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved* (2006), de Waal, Part I: Morality Evolved, pg. 3-33, 42-58  
 “Richard Dawkins, Edward O. Wilson, And The Consensus Of The Many” (2015), D.S. Wilson  
 ❖Unit IV essay topics distributed.❖
- 6/6 **The Evolutionary Debunking of Morality**  
 Reading: *The Evolution of Morality* (2007), Joyce, pg. 179-184, 221-230  
 Optional: *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), Chapter 3: Comparison of the Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals (continued), Darwin, pg. 70-74

6/8 **How Moral to Be**

Reading: "Moral Saints" (1982), Wolf, pg. 419-430, 435

Optional: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972), Singer

6/12 **Final Essay Drop-off**

3-6 pm, location TBA

❖ **Unit IV essay due.** ❖

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

---

Late essays must be submitted in class at the next meeting after the essay was due (both electronically and as a hard copy) if they are to receive credit. Late essays will receive a one letter-grade deduction. After that, they will not be accepted. An extension may be granted if requested in advance of the due date for the assignment. In general, extensions will only be granted for reasons of religious observance, illness, or personal or family emergency.

### EMAIL

---

You can reach me at: [csebens@gmail.com](mailto:csebens@gmail.com). Please only email me about logistical concerns: requesting extensions, scheduling additional office hours, etc. I find it is more effective to discuss course content face-to-face. I am happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss any philosophical questions and to schedule additional meetings as needed.

### SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

---

If you require any special arrangements for completing the course assignments or participating fully in class meetings, please let me know at the beginning of the course.

### PLAGIARISM

---

You are encouraged to discuss your work with other students and even to share drafts with each other to get feedback. However, the work you submit should be your own. If you incorporate the ideas of others, cite those sources. Do not copy language too closely. Even when summarizing and paraphrasing cited sources, you must use your own language and present the ideas in an original way. Please ask me if you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism. We will discuss plagiarism and academic integrity in more detail on 4/13 (see also [academicintegrity.ucsd.edu](http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu)).

If I have reason to believe that you have engaged in academic misconduct, I will report the case to the Academic Integrity Office for review. If they determine that it is indeed a case of academic dishonesty, you will receive a zero on the assignment.