

The Nature of Reality

Winter 2024

Seminar Information:

PHIL 14

Professor Shields

Lectures: MW 9.00-9.50 Center Hall 113

Office Hours and Contact Information:

Office: Arts & Humanities Building 447

Office hours: W 14.00-15.00 and by appt.

e-mail: CJShields@ucsd.edu

website: cjshields.com

N.b. I prefer e-mail to telephone as a manner of student contact. I make an effort to answer student e-mails promptly, but please be aware that I measure promptness in this domain in days rather than hours or minutes.

Teaching Assistants:

Andrew Bollhagen (abollhag@ucsd.edu)

Office and Hours: Arts & Humanities 0435, M 10.00-12.00 and by appt.

Daniel Cohen (djcohen@ucsd.edu)

Office and Hours: Arts & Humanities 0430, W 10.00-12.00 and by appt.

Ayoob Shahmoradi (ashahmor@ucsd.edu)

Office and Hours: Arts & Humanities 0429, W 10.00-12.00 and by appt.

Text:

Reason and Responsibility, 16th ed, ed J. Feinberg and R. Shafer-Landau (Cengage: 2017)

This text is available in various formats. It is available in print in the UCSD bookstore; an electronic version is also available on the [publisher's site](#) and on [Amazon](#).

You may use any format you wish, though you should have access to this work during both lectures and discussion sections.

Requirements and Protocol:

Students will sit two examinations, one at mid-term and at the end of term, and write two essays, of 1,200 words each.

Dates for the examinations:

Mid-term Examination: **Friday 9 February at 9.00**, in the room of our regularly scheduled time for lecture.

Final Examination: **Friday 15 March at 9.00**, in the room of our regularly scheduled time for lecture.

Due Dates for the Essays:

Essay One: 6 February

Essay Two: 13 March

I will offer prompts for each of the essays. You are, however, welcome to ignore these suggestions and write on a pertinent topic of your own choosing, but only if that topic is approved by your Teaching Assistant at least one week in advance of the due date.

These essays are to be submitted electronically in a main-stream word-processing format or (if you use something non-standard) as .pdf documents, to our Canvas site. Papers will be accepted until 17.00 on their due dates.

Due to the extreme compression of the term, late papers cannot be accepted; exceptions to his policy will be made only in cases of documented emergencies.

Attendance is required at all lectures and section meetings.

Prospectus:

This course provides an introduction to philosophy and philosophical method. We will examine *inter alia* the following main areas and questions:

Rational Theology

- Do we have any compelling, or even plausible, argument for God's existence? Do we have, that is, any good reason to be (or become) theists?
- Should we be concerned if we do not? What is the relation between faith and reason?
- Do we have, by contrast, a compelling, or even plausible, argument for God's non-existence? Do we have, that is, any good reason to be (or become) atheists?
- Is atheism the only rationally acceptable stance in a scientifically informed world?
- Should we, perhaps, prefer a humble sort of agnosticism?

The Mind and its Place in Nature

- What is the mind-body problem? (Or, rather: what are the mind-body problems?)

- Are there good theism-independent reasons for accepting mind-body dualism?
- What are the prospects, if any, for personal post-mortem survival?
- What does personal identity consist in?
 - Do we have good reasons for thinking that you are the same person as the two-year old organism with whom you are biologically continuous? (What, precisely, does biological continuity consist in?)
 - Is personal identity necessary for survival?

Free Will and Human Responsibility

- Are human freedom and responsibility compatible with universal causal determinism?
- Does universal causal determinism in fact obtain?
- Are human freedom and responsibility compatible with the denial of universal causal determinism?
- What form of human freedom does moral responsibility require?

Reading Schedule:

Please adhere to reading schedule, but note: some readings will be discussed directly, while others will merely be assumed as background for lectures; all are, however to be read before the lecture for which they are assigned. It is good practice to reread them after the lecture as well.

(RR = *Reason and Responsibility*)

Weeks One-Two: Rational Theology

Week One

- M:
 - Feinberg, 'A Logic Lesson,' RR, 1
 - Aquinas, 'The Five Ways,' RR, 47
- W:
 - Anselm, 'The Ontological Argument from Proslogion,' RR, 31
 - Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, 'On Behalf of the Fool,' RR, 33
 - Rowe, 'The Ontological Argument,' RR, 34

Week Two

- M: No lecture: Martin Luther King Day
- W:
 - Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence,' RR, 118
 - Van Inwagen, 'The Argument from Evil,' RR, 126
 - Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief,' RR, 151

Weeks Three-Five: The Mind and its Place in Nature

Week Three

- M:
 - Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (Meditations One and Two Only), RR 240
 - Gertler, 'In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism,' RR, 359
- W:

- Jackson, 'The Qualia Problem,' RR, 372

Week Four

- M:
 - Papineau, 'The Case for Materialism' RR, 376
- W:
 - Churchland, 'Functionalism and Eliminative Materialism,' RR, 382

Week Five

- M:
 - Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence,' RR, 391
- W:
 - Searle, 'Minds, Brains, Programs,' RR, 400

Weeks Six-Seven: Personal Identity

Week Six:

- M:
 - Preliminary Examination (13 February)
- W:
 - Locke, 'The Prince and the Cobbler,' RR, 413
 - Reid, 'Of Mr. Locke's Account of our Personal Identity,' RR, 416

Week Seven:

- M: No lecture: Presidents' Day
- W:
 - Kagan, 'What Matters,' RR 427
 - Shields, 'Personal Identity' ([podcast](#))

Weeks Eight-Ten: Free Will and Human Responsibility

Week Eight:

- M:
 - Strawson, 'The Maze of Free Will' [Available on our Canvas site.]
- W:
 - Beebe, 'Compatibilism and the Ability to Do Otherwise,' RR 510

Week Nine:

- M:
 - Rachels, 'The Case Against Free Will,' RR, 481
- W:
 - Pereboom, 'Why We Have No Free Will and Can Live Without It,' RR, 491

Week Ten:

- M:
 - Chisholm, 'Human Freedom and the Self,' RR, 459
- W:
 - Quodlibetal