Instructor: Ana-Maria Andrei, PhD
Office: Faculty Center 264
Office Hours: MW 12:30 – 1:30; TR 12:00 – 1:30 and by appointment
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Course Description
The course focuses on the nature of thought experiments in contemporary philosophy and their use as a central tool in trying to solve philosophical problems. Among the thought experiments discussed are the following: trolley scenarios, the violinist, the experience machine, zombies, inverted spectra, Martian pain, the China brain, Mary’s room, the ship of Theseus, mind swapping, person fission, teletransportation and brain transplants. We will first look at how such thought experiments can be employed to explore the content of important metaphysical, epistemological and ethical concepts and shed light on the mind-body problem, the personal identity problem, the problem of free will, the nature of knowledge and the nature of morality. We will subsequently examine and appraise significant methodological objections raised against reliance on thought experiments in contemporary philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:
- present a number of key thought experiments in contemporary philosophy;
- articulate the philosophical problems that these thought experiments are used to shed light on;
- explain the role that the thought experiments have in testing philosophical positions on the nature of morality, the mind-body relation, personal identity, free will and the nature of knowledge;
- formulate and evaluate important criticisms of the use of thought experiments in philosophy.

Required Texts
All readings will be made available as pdf files on Blackboard.

Course Requirements
- two exams, the second of which will be cumulative; each exam consists in a series of true/false, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions;
- two papers focusing on problems discussed in the course (you will receive a separate handout with detailed guidelines for how to write a philosophy paper);
- pop-up quizzes on the reading assigned and in-class exercises;
- active participation in class discussion is highly recommended as the best way to further your comprehension of the material and get feedback on your ideas.

Grading Policy
Grade breakdown:
midterm exam 25%
final exam 25%
papers 20% each
quizzes and in-class exercises 10%

Final letter grades will be assigned based on the following percentages:
Over 90% = A
80 – 89% = B
70 – 79% = C
60 – 69% = D
Below 60 = F

Attendance and late work policy
It is not possible to do well in class if you fail to attend class regularly. No late work will be accepted, unless due to extreme circumstances.

Classroom behavior
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. Students are expected to come to class on time and switch off cell phones before entering the classroom. Please do not read newspapers, use your laptop or phone in a disruptive fashion, sleep, eat or distract your fellow students in any other way. You should be attentive, take notes, participate in classroom activities as required and be courteous to your classmates and the instructor. No recording of any kind is permitted in this course unless recommended by the Disability Resource Center.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the presentation of work as one’s own that was in fact produced by another author (e.g., the submission of a paper as one’s own work, when it was written by someone else, or the submission of a portion of a paper written by another author, without citing the source of the material). University policy strictly prohibits plagiarism. Plagiarized work will be assigned a grade of “F.”

Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at:
http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department
Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. The last day to drop a class for the spring semester is April 10, 2020.

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**Course Schedule**

*This is a tentative schedule. For your benefit, we will be flexible about what topics we discuss, exactly, and when. It is your responsibility to stay up to date with schedule revisions.*

**Week 1 (01/22)** Introduction

**Week 2 (01/27, 01/29)**

Elements of logic

**Thought experiments in Ethics**


**Week 3 (02/03, 02/05)**


A. Fisher and J. Tallant, “Potentiality and personhood” and M. Tooley, Abortion and Infanticide

**Week 4 (02/10, 02/12)**

A. Fisher and J. Tallant, “The experience machine” and D. Weijers and V. Schouten “An assessment of recent responses to the experience machine objection to hedonism”

**Thought experiments on personal identity**

T. Gendler, “Theseus”

**Week 5 (02/17, 02/19)**

B. Williams, “The self and the future”

D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (excerpt) and T. Gendler, “Personal Identity”

**Week 6 (02/24, 02/26)**

D. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (excerpt)

**Thought experiments on the mind-body problem**

H. Putnam, “The nature of mental states”

**Week 7 (03/02, 03/04)**

N. Block, “Troubles with functionalism”

A. Fisher and J. Tallant, “Qualia and the mental” and F. Jackson, “Epiphenomenal qualia”

[Spring break]

**Week 8 (03/16, 03/18)**
Week 9 (03/23, 03/25)
D. Chalmers, *The conscious mind* (excerpt)
**Thought experiments in the theory of knowledge**
A. Fisher and J. Tallant, “Analyzing knowledge” and E. Gettier “Is justified true belief knowledge?”

Week 10 (03/30, 04/01)
**Thought experiments on free will**
H. Frankfurt, “Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility"
C. Ginet, “In Defense of the Principle of Alternative Possibilities: Why I Don't Find Frankfurt's Argument Convincing”

Week 11 (04/06, 04/08)
**Objections to the use of thought experiments in philosophy and responses**
M. Beaney, “Conceptions of analysis in analytic philosophy” (SEP article)
W. V. O. Quine, “Two dogmas of empiricism”

Week 12 (04/13, 04/15)
H. P. Grice and P. F. Strawson, “In defense of a dogma”
S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (excerpt)

Week 13 (04/20, 04/22)
H. Putnam, “The meaning of ‘meaning’”
M. Deutsch, “Intuitions, counterexamples and experimental philosophy”

Week 14 (04/27, 04/29)
F. Jackson, “The role of conceptual analysis”
F. Jackson, “Conceptual analysis and metaphysical necessity”

Week 15 (05/04, 05/06)
Taking stock
Final review

[The final exam will be held on the assigned date.]