

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21

Philosophy Course Number: 3991F
Self and Society

Fall Term	Instructor: Edward Baggs
Synchronous Mon 12:30–1:30; Weds 12:30–2:30	Online office Hours: Mon and Tues 11:30–12:30
Classroom n/a (all teaching online)	Email: ebaggs@uwo.ca

DESCRIPTION

Why do social psychologists typically study individuals? Why do universities have separate departments for psychology, anthropology, sociology, and education? Is there such a thing as society? Modern Western thought privileges the individual actor as the principal explanatory unit for understanding society: individuals are said to make independent choices about how to vote, about the kinds of work that they do, about what counts as beautiful, and so on. But this is not the only possible way to understand society. In this course we will examine the historical reasons why Western thought came to understand the individual's relation to society in the way that it has. We will explore how this conception of the individual has led scientists and researchers to look to the mind in order to explain economic, political, and social phenomena. We will also explore several alternatives to individual-based explanations. In doing so, we will venture into educational theory, developmental psychology, feminist epistemology, cultural anthropology, and evolutionary ecology. At the end of the course we will have an understanding of why Western thought has come to be carved up in the particular way that it has, and we will have a firm grounding in a set of ideas about how to put it back together.

TEXTS

A combination of philosophical and scientific (i.e., methodological, research, and review papers/chapters) articles extracted from philosophical and scientific journals, books, textbooks, and anthologies will be made available to students as PDF files on OWL.

OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will have a general understanding of contemporary philosophical and scientific approaches to the study of selves and society, and of the historical ideas that gave rise to these approaches. Students will have gained an understanding of the basic methods used in social psychology laboratories for enquiring about how minds negotiate social situations; students will also have gained an understanding of how to interrogate the methods of these studies and the findings that arise from them. By the end of the course, students will have received basic training in reading and interpreting historical texts, and will have developed their skills in critically evaluating proposals on topics that are of interest to them.

REQUIREMENTS

Regular Attendance and Participation	20%
4 Online quizzes	20% (5% each)
Midterm Paper	25%
Final Paper	35%

Regular Attendance and participation — An important part of the classes will be dedicated to activities based on having different kinds of oral and written conversations on the texts assigned every week. Students are expected to participate in these activities.

Quizzes — Quizzes will have between 5 and 6 questions that may be either multiple-choice or short-answer questions. Student will take the quizzes during class time and will be allowed to use all the class materials to answer the questions.

Midterm Paper (1000 words) — Students are expected to write a historical paper in which they analyze a classic work from social psychology or a related field. The paper should critically evaluate the study's methods, and outline. This paper is due by Week 7. Submitting the paper after Week 7 will be considered as late work.

Final Paper (3000 words) — Students are expected to write an argumentative paper concerning one position addressed along the course. It is expected that the student argues against the selected position. The paper should have four parts: (i) a short introduction where the main thesis defended by the student is clearly stated, (ii) an explanatory section in which the opposing argument is analyzed, (iii) a discussion section in which the student defends an argument in favour of their thesis, and (iv) a conclusion summing up the results of the argumentation. This paper is due in the last week. Submitting the paper after the last week will be considered as late work.

* Everyone is welcomed and encouraged to contact the instructor for help with any of the assignments.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration,

together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdwweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Readings: Dawkins 1976 *The Selfish Gene*, ch.4
Lewontin 1993, *Biology as Ideology*, ch. 2

Week 10 **Reading Days**

1st Paper Due

Week 11 **What is the economy?**

Readings: Keynes 1930 Economic possibilities for our grandchildren
Cassidy 2009 *How Markets Fail*, ch. 4

Week 12 **The wisdom and the madness of crowds**

Readings: Surowieki 2004 *The Wisdom of Crowds*
Krugman 2009 How did economists get it so wrong?

Week 13 **The commons: are we doomed?**

Readings: Hardin 1968 The tragedy of the commons
Ostrom 2009 Nobel Prize acceptance speech

Week 14 **The challenge of climate change: individual, social, global**

Readings: Margulis & Lovelock 1974 Biological modulation of the
Earth's atmosphere

Week 15 **Exam Week**

Final Paper Due