



Topics in Philosophy I A (Columbia Dual BA) | PIU11041

Year	Junior Freshman
ECTS Credits	5
Contact Hours	22 hours (5 tutorials)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	1
Module Leader & Lecturer	Julian Bacharach
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Module Learning Aims:

This module will offer a broad introduction to some of the most fundamental questions in epistemology and metaphysics, about our knowledge of the world and our place in it.

Module Learning Outcomes:

Students will become familiar with the key topics in metaphysics and epistemology listed below, as well as developing core philosophical skills of critical thinking, argumentation, and engagement with both classic and contemporary texts.

Module Content:

Will the sun come up tomorrow? Can we know that an external world exists? What am I, and could I survive the destruction of my physical body? Can we be free in a universe governed by physical laws? Are people really divided into races, and what does this amount to? This course will address such fundamental questions about the nature of the reality we live in and our knowledge of it. The first half of the module will focus on epistemology, covering topics such as: the nature of knowledge, external world skepticism, the problem of induction, and the rationality of belief in God. The second half of the module will focus on metaphysics, covering the topics: consciousness, the self and personal identity, free will and determinism, and race.

Assessment:

As a participation component, students will be required to post a short response to each week's reading on the Blackboard forum. This is a pass/fail component worth 10% of the overall module. The rest of the assessment consists of a mid-term coursework essay and a final coursework essay, each worth 20%; and an in-person examination (two questions), worth 50%.

Should reassessment be required, this is component by component. Since the attendance component cannot be reassessed, the weighting of the reassessed components will be: 25% for each coursework essay, 50% exam.



Recommended Reading List:

An accessible introduction to many of the topics to be covered over the course is Thomas Nagel, *What Does it All Mean?* In the first week we will discuss the first Meditation from Descartes' *Meditations on the First Philosophy*. The text for this is available online here:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/descartes/1639/meditations.htm>