

## **PHIL 293: Philosophy of Memory**

Spring 2024

M/W 4:30-5:45

Beering 1248

### **Instructors:**

Dr. Sarah Robins, 7124 Beering, Philosophy Dept, [skrobins@purdue.edu](mailto:skrobins@purdue.edu)

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 and by appointment

Dr. Marta Caravà, 7136 Beering, Philosophy Dept, [mcav@purdue.edu](mailto:mcav@purdue.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00-5:00; Wednesdays 2.30-3.30 and by appointment

**Course Text:** There is no assigned text for the course. All readings will be posted to Brightspace.

### **Course Description**

Memory is a fundamental cognitive activity. You make use of it every time you walk across campus, take an exam, think about your future, or share stories with a friend. Given its importance, memory is at the heart of many philosophical puzzles and problems. What makes you the same person over time? Are you responsible for what you forget? Is your memory only in your head, or also on your phone? How do we - as friends, families, cultures, and nations - remember shared experiences? Is it good to be nostalgic? In this course we will use readings from philosophy and memory science, as well as films, literature, podcasts, etc. to explore such questions. The aim of this course is to give you a survey of topics in philosophy, using memory as the common thread.

By the end of this course, you should have good working knowledge of several key issues in the philosophy of memory and ways that these connect to the empirical investigation of memory in psychology and neuroscience, as well as to more traditional philosophical questions in the philosophy of mind, science, metaphysics and epistemology. Throughout the course, we'll emphasize the importance of learning how to read and respond to a philosophical text. This will prepare you for more advanced courses in philosophy, on these and other topics. So in addition to learning about particular ideas and theories, you'll be further developing your ability to assess and produce philosophically compelling arguments.

## **Grading**

Attendance & Participation: 15%

Reading Responses: 30% (6 @ 5% each)

Research Project: 55%

Proposal - 5%

Outline - 10%

Presentation/Peer Workshop - 15%

Final Paper - 25%

## **Attendance and Participation: 15%**

You should come to class. What's more, you should do the reading for each topic and arrive prepared to be an active listener during lectures and contributor during discussions. If you miss class, you will be expected to initiate contact with us and/or classmates to see what you've missed.

Earning your attendance and participation grade requires more than simply showing up. The quality of this class depends on your participation. We hope you will arrive ready to raise and respond to questions that come up in the course of our conversation. We recognize that people differ in the ease with which they feel comfortable speaking up in class. The best participant isn't always (or even often) the one who knows the answer. Asking for clarification when you're confused, offering to elaborate on a point made by another student, providing feedback on and engagement with others' presentations, making connections to previous material—these are all important forms of participation.

Each class we will pass around an attendance sheet for everyone to sign. At the end of class each day, we'll make a few quick notes on that sheet about each attendee's participation. Midway through the term, we will provide formal feedback on your participation and estimated grade for this portion of the course (as well as how to improve for any who are struggling). You are welcome to discuss any concerns or questions you have about your attendance and participation with either Prof. Robins or Prof. Caravà: over email, during office hours, or by scheduling an appointment.

## **Reading Responses 30% (6 @ 5% each)**

These responses are meant to give you a chance to engage with readings prior to class discussion. These short assignments also allow us to provide you with quick and detailed feedback about your writing and grasp of course material.

Responses should be somewhere between **500-750 words**. Use these responses to 1) develop and demonstrate your understanding of the readings and 2) initiate your evaluation of the issues, to prepare

you for class discussion and (possibly) the larger writing assignments. For 1), you can address the reading in its entirety or focus on a particular section or argument. For 2), you can pose a discussion question, challenge an example, critique an argument, raise an objection, or explore an interesting implication. Responses can be used as the basis for your research paper.

Reading responses must be typed and handed in as a hard copy (not emailed) in class on the day that the reading you are writing about is assigned. No late responses will be accepted.

There is an established due date for the first reading response: **Wednesday, Jan 17th**. Over the course of the semester, you must submit 5 more reading responses, for a total of 6. After the first reading response, there are no set deadlines - you can choose the day/reading for your responses. You could complete them all in the first few weeks, save them for the end of term, or spread them throughout.

### **Research Project: 55%**

During the second half of the semester you will develop and write an argumentative, philosophical essay on a topic of your choosing (so long as it draws from the ideas and themes covered in our course). You will work on the project in stages, described below, and submit the paper during finals week:

**Wednesday, May 1st.**

#### **Proposal: 5%**

In the week following Spring Break, we'll use Monday, March 18th to provide an overview of the research project assignment. There will be no class meeting on Wednesday, March 20th. Use this time to explore possible topics and develop a paper proposal (topic, focal question, possible references). Further details on proposal requirements will be provided later in the term. Proposals must be submitted on Brightspace by **Monday March 25th**.

#### **Outline: 10%**

After receiving feedback on the proposal and exploring the topic further, you will develop and submit an outline for your paper. The outline should include a tentative thesis, argument featuring 3-4 claims, and 3 references. Further details on outline requirements will be provided later in the term. Outlines must be submitted on Brightspace by **Wednesday, April 10th**.

#### **Presentation/Peer Workshop: 10%**

The last week of class will be devoted to sharing paper projects with peers to receive constructive feedback. This activity will focus either on presentations or peer workshops,

depending on which is best suited to class size and selected topics. Format will be determined after proposal submission and further assignment details will be provided at that time.

### **Paper: 25%**

Your research project will culminate in a paper, an argumentative essay on your chosen topic. Your paper should be 1500-2500 words (roughly 4-7 pages). This paper must meet the general requirements outlined above and demonstrate significant development of the ideas from the earlier proposal, outline, and presentation. Further guidance and sample papers will be provided as research projects begin. You are encouraged to meet with Profs. Robins and Caravà about your papers as often as is useful - we will not, however, read paper drafts in advance of submission. Papers must be submitted on Brightspace by **Wednesday, May 1st**.

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### **To make grades as straightforward as possible, this course contains 1000 points.**

An assignment worth 10% of— your grade is worth 100 points, 25% is 250, etc. This allows you to keep track of how many of the 1000 points you've earned or lost at any point in the semester—and straightforward to figure out your letter grade from your end-of-term total.

A = 93.50 and above	C = 73.50–76.49
A– = 90.00–93.49	C– = 70.00–73.49
B+ = 86.50–89.99	D+ = 66.50–69.99
B = 83.50–86.49	D = 63.00–66.49
B– = 80.00–83.49	D– = 60.00–63.49
C+ = 76.50–79.99	F = 59.99 and below

Questions about this scale for grade distribution? Justification for this approach to plus/minus grading can be found in a paper written by fellow philosopher Dr. Ben Eggleston. His discussion is based in practices at another university, but one that uses the same GPA conversion as Purdue:

[http://www.benegg.net/plus-minus\\_grading.pdf](http://www.benegg.net/plus-minus_grading.pdf)

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### **Academic Integrity**

Please see the University Policies and Statements section of Brightspace for a discussion of academic honesty. Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing [integrity@purdue.edu](mailto:integrity@purdue.edu) or by calling 765-494-8778.

## **AI-generated writing**

Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as [plagiarism](#). If you think that you have good academic reason to make use of AI-generated writing in your coursework, you are required to discuss this possibility with Prof. Robins or Prof. Caravà prior to any such use or submission. If permission is granted, the restrictions and guidelines on use will be clearly established and limited, and there must be explicit acknowledgement of AI use in the submission. Outside of these (presumably very limited) circumstances, any portion of an assignment determined to have been generated by a chatbot will be in violation of the academic integrity expectations of this course and the university. Your case will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further review of your status at this University.

## **Technology Policy**

The aim is for our classroom to be as device-free as possible. While we will all most likely have our devices nearby, our class meetings offer us a rare and critical respite from those screens. When you use devices during class, you're not only deciding to compromise your ability to learn—you are making that decision for others around you. If this occurs, we will ask you to put the device away or leave class for the day.

## **Classroom Community**

It is our hope that we will build a positive, supportive, and constructive classroom community this term. At a minimum, our interactions as a class will adhere to basic principles of respect and individual dignity, and will align with Purdue's Nondiscrimination Statement:

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life.

Out of respect for one another, please refrain from posting images, chats, or videos from class without prior consent of the instructor and every student in our class.

## Course Schedule

(note: reading should be completed in advance of the class meeting for which they are listed).

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>What is Memory?</b>
Jan 8	Course Introduction (no reading)
Jan 10	"Memory" by De Brigard & Robins
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>What Connects Us to the Past?</b>
Jan 15	MLK Day - NO CLASS
Jan 17	"The Madeleine Effect" by Hains (Aeon) & "If Proust had Whiskers" by Barwich
	<b>Reading Response 1 Due 1/17</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>What is Memory's Role in Self Identity?</b>
Jan 22	"In a Sentimental mood" by Schectman
Jan 24	"Against Narrativity" by Strawson
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>How are Emotions Involved in Remembering?</b>
Jan 29	"Being Emotional About the Past" by Debus
Jan 31	"Different Ways of Being Emotional About the Past" by Trakas
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Can We Remember Past Pain?</b>
Feb 5	"What Experience Doesn't Teach" by Montero
Feb 7	"Amnesia, Anesthesia, and Warranted Fear" by Carbonell
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>What Counts as Successful Memory?</b>
Feb 12	"Our Faithfulness to the Past" by Campbell
Feb 14	"Funes the Memorious" by Borges

	& “The Abyss” by Oliver Sachs
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Is Forgetting a Memory Error?</b>
Feb 19	“The Many Faces of Forgetting” by Fawcett & Hulbert
Feb 21	“The Importance of Forgetting” by Basu
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Can We Share Memories?</b>
Feb 26	“The Extended Mind” by Clark & Chalmers
Feb 28	“Memories within Myth” by Nunn (Aeon)
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>What Role do Physical Objects Play in Our Memory?</b>
March 4	“The Repair Shop” by McCarroll & Kirby "
March 6	Watch & Discuss: The Repair Shop (TBD)
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Break!</b>
March 11	Spring Break, No Class
March 13	Spring Break, No Class
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Research Project Prep</b>
March 18	Research project overview/writing philosophy papers (no reading)
March 20	(no class mtg, work on your research project proposal)
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>How do Mnemonics Work?</b>
March 25	“Feats of Memory Anyone Can Do” Foer, TED Talk
	<b>Project Proposals Due (3/25)</b>
March 27	“Memory, Imagination, and Skill” by Kind
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>How Many Living Things Have Memory?</b>

April 1	“Memory in Ant Colonies” by Gordon (Aeon)
April 3	“Behaviorist Approaches to Memory” by Abramson & Levin
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Do We Owe Memory to Others?</b>
April 8	(Solar Eclipse) <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> TBD
April 10	“Memory, Desire, and Value in Eternal Sunshine” by Driver
	<b>Project Outline Due 4/10</b>
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>What are the Social Implications of Memory Research?</b>
April 15	“Memory Errors and Criminal Trials” by Puddifoot
April 17	“The Mandela Effect” by Michaelian & Wall
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Research Projects</b>
April 22	Class Presentations/Peer Workshops
April 24	Class Presentations/Peer Workshops
<b>Finals</b>	<b>Research Paper Due 5/1</b>