PHIL108601 ETHICAL IDENTITIES & PERSONHOOD
Boston College Summer Session 2016
Summer 2, 6/27 – 8/05
Tues/Thursday 6-9:15

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Boston College Mission Statement
Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description
This course explores contemporary approaches to personhood, including philosophical, theological, and scientific contributions to concepts such as uniqueness and particularity, subjectivity and desire, relationality and communion; freedom and ethical responsibility. In the second half of this course, we address the implications of our investigations to specific contemporary issues, including the influence of technology (e.g. social media, artificial intelligence), market economies, and consumerism on our self-understanding as persons and ethical beings. Throughout this course, we will continually return to two fundamental questions: 1) Who am I? and 2) Who should I become? Our readings and class discussion will assist in formulating answers to these fundamental questions, helping to uncover some of the hidden assumptions guiding our understanding of ourselves.
Textbooks & Readings (Required-Kindle Version acceptable)


Textbooks & Readings (Recommended)


Canvas
Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) at Boston College, designed to help faculty and students share ideas, collaborate on assignments, discuss course readings and materials, submit assignments, and much more - all online. As a Boston College student, you should familiarize yourself with this important tool. For more information and training resources for using Canvas, click here.

Course Objectives
1. Understand and describe contemporary philosophical, theological, and scientific methods for understanding what it means to be a person. Students will read primary and secondary texts and class time will include comparing and contrasting their respective merits and limitations. Exams will assess the student's ability learn and critically think about these different approaches for understanding personhood.
2. Examine the particular areas of continued debate surrounding our understanding of the human person and understand how specific thinkers have attempted to resolve these debates. We will discuss the relevance of these debates in class and students will be asked to provide their own well-reasoned arguments for or against certain positions.
3. Demonstrate knowledge concerning how history, culture, and gender impact our understanding of the human person. In particular, we will be reading texts that explore how changes in technology, economy, and gender constructs have led to momentous shifts in our self-understanding. One paper assignment will require students to critically think about one particular social issue in light of how personhood is understood.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how identity relates to ethical values and norms. In particular, we will read texts that inquire into the role that ethics plays in forming our identity and consider different ethical theories as they help us to answer questions concerning our ultimate purpose of life. Students will be assessed for their ability to think about different ethical perspectives and their ability to apply one or more of these approaches to their own lives.

Grading
Take home Midterm essay exam 25%
Take home Final essay exam 25%
Five 1-2 page Response Papers 50% (10% each)

The undergraduate grading system for Summer Session is as follows:

A (4.00), A- (3.67)
B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67)
C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)
D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67)
F (.00)

The graduate grading system for Summer Session is as follows:
A (4.00), A- (3.67)
B+ (3.33), B (3.00)
B- (2.67), passing but does not count toward degree
C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit
F (.00)

All students can access final grades through Agora after the grading deadline each semester. Transcripts are available through the Office of Student Services.

**Deadlines and Late Work**
Assignments are due (submitted through canvas) before the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded down one letter grade every day it is late.

**Course Assignments** (readings, exercises and/or experiences)
It is expected that 8 hours per week of your study time out will be spent on out of class assignments and exercises. These are listed below. Please note that some weeks will require more time and some weeks less time but the average is approximately 8 hours per week over the semester.

**Midterm & Final Exams**
These will be take home exams in which you will be asked to provide a 3-4 page argument that will require you to critically engage the ideas and thinkers addressed in the course in response to a question prompt. The essay should demonstrate your understanding of the thinkers we cover and to appropriately utilize source material/primary texts to support your answer.

**Weekly Response Papers (Five in total)**
This assignment will require that you respond to the readings. You will write a 1-2 page, double spaced, 12 font, 1 inch margin, paper in which you discuss a central idea in the text you read. You should support your summary with quotes and citations from assigned text. You will do this assignment for five different thinkers, one of which must be Kierkegaard. You will pass in the assignment at the beginning of class that day. A large part of your grade will be based upon how much you demonstrate familiarity with the text and your ability to push yourself to understand what they say. All papers should be written without grammatical and spelling errors.

**Class Preparation and Participation:**
Students are expected to have read the assigned materials due that day before class. You should take notes as you read, paying particular attention to ideas you find interesting, questions you are left pondering, and criticisms that arise in your minds. Class participation is defined as attentiveness, raising questions, and making insightful comments and connections.

No cell phone or electronic device usage is permitted in class. The exception is that you can use a laptop computer to take notes only. If you do use a laptop to take notes, internet usage for non-class items is prohibited. Please turn off the sound of your cell phones before class. Also, do not engage in side conversations during class. Any form of repeated distraction will be noted and will impact my qualitative assessment of your participation at the end of the semester.

I evaluate class participation based upon the following qualitative criteria:
Frequent Distraction and/or inattention: Can substantially hurt grade pending severity of problem
Completely silent but attentive and non-distractive = No grade change
Regular class participation that is engaged, asks good questions, makes highly relevant comments, and brings in helpful ideas learned from other classes/sources to supplement discussion = up to 4% point increase pending overall contribution.
As a standard part of every class, I will provide the opportunity for any general questions at the beginning. This will be followed by an introduction of main topics being lectured on that day. Feel free to make relevant associations with other areas of knowledge you have. In most classes I have incorporated time for class discussion but always feel free to raise your hand and I will call on you at an appropriate stopping point.

**Attendance**

Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, the student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, points are given for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class.

Consistent with BC’s commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

No other absences are excused. However, built into the absence policy is leniency should a class be missed. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class. The attendance policy is the following: 1 class missed is 2% off your final grade. 2 classes missed is 10% off your final grade. 3 classes missed is 20% off your final grade. *A fourth missed class leads to an automatic failure.* These deductions in your grade do not include points that can also be lost for not turning in an assignment or participating in class the day you miss.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the Summer Session Office at 617-552-3800 for consultation.

**Course Schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignments</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/28</td>
<td>A Brief Intellectual History of Personhood: Ancient to Postmodern</td>
<td>Chapter 1 &amp; 2(CCE)</td>
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<td>6/30</td>
<td>Kierkegaard</td>
<td>Fear &amp; Trembling (BWE)</td>
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<td>Chapter 4 (CCE)</td>
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<td>7/05</td>
<td>Nietzsche</td>
<td>Genealogy of Morals (BWE)</td>
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<td>Ch. 7 (CCE)</td>
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<td>7/07</td>
<td>Marx</td>
<td>Selected reading-to be provided</td>
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<td>7/12</td>
<td>Heidegger</td>
<td>Being and Time (BWE)</td>
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<td>Ch. 8 (CCE)</td>
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<td>7/14</td>
<td>Sartre &amp;</td>
<td>Existentialism (BWE)</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Author/Text</td>
<td>Reading/Chapter</td>
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<td>7/19</td>
<td>De Bouvoir &amp; Butler</td>
<td>Ethics of Ambiguity (BWE) Ch. 13 (CCE)</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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<td>7/21</td>
<td>Merleau-Ponty</td>
<td>Selected Reading to be provided</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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<td>7/26</td>
<td>Levinas</td>
<td>Selected reading-to be provided</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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<td>7/28</td>
<td>Derrida</td>
<td>Selected reading-to be provided</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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<td>8/02</td>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>Selected reading-to be provided</td>
<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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<td>8/04</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
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<td>Final Exam Due</td>
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**Written Work**

Summer Session students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed and submitted in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA or CLA style per your instructor’s requirements. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. For writing support, please contact the Connors Family Learning Center.

**Accommodation and Accessibility**

Boston College is committed to providing accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities. Specific documentation from the appropriate office is required for students seeking accommodation in Summer Session courses. Advanced notice and formal registration with the appropriate office is required to facilitate this process. There are two separate offices at BC that coordinate services for students with disabilities:

- The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC) coordinates services for students with LD and ADHD.
- The Disabilities Services Office (DSO) coordinates services for all other disabilities.

Find out more about BC’s commitment to accessibility at [www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility](http://www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility).

**Scholarship and Academic Integrity**

Students in Summer Session courses must produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to cite references is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on exams or assignments, or submitting the same material or substantially similar material to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work. Please see the [Boston College policy on academic integrity](http://www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility) for more information.