PHIL 3395: Self-Knowledge
Dr. Jesse Butler
Spring 2016
CRN 28252
10-10:50 a.m.   MWF   Burdick 302

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Required Texts: All required readings will be made available online through the course Blackboard site at https://my.uca.edu/ and/or the course website at https://sites.google.com/a/uca.edu/self-knowledge/

Course Description and Objectives

This is a new course developed through the National Endowment for the Humanities’ Enduring Questions program*, offering an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural exploration of the central enduring question: Who am I? The goals of this course are to explore the human pursuit of self-knowledge and facilitate students’ understanding of themselves in relation to diverse conceptions of self and identity, drawing connections across classic literature, academic inquiry, and the understanding of oneself in contemporary life.

The course will achieve these goals through study of works that investigate the nature of the self and self-knowledge from a wide variety of perspectives throughout history and across cultures, from ancient Eastern and Western philosophy to American literature on the self-made self, from religious pursuits of spirituality to cutting-edge advancements in neuroscience. Through the study of these themes and perspectives across the course, students will develop their abilities to understand, compare, discuss, and evaluate diverse textual resources. Students will also be encouraged to develop their own thoughts and viewpoints on the nature of self and self-knowledge, as well as to investigate the roles these viewpoints may play in both their own lives and the issues confronted by humanity in general.

There are no prerequisites and the course is open to all interested students. Philosophy students may use this course to fulfill 3 credit hours in the “Epistemology & Metaphysics” area or as a general elective. Cognitive Neuroscience students may use this course to fulfill 3 credit hours of required coursework.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Attendance & Participation: 25% of total grade
- Short Assignments: 25% of total grade
- Reading Exams: 25% of total grade
- Final Presentation & Project: 25% of total grade

* http://www.neh.gov/grants/education/enduring-questions  NEH Grant AQ-51002-14. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this course and its documents do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.
**Attendance & Participation:** This course will emphasize active intellectual inquiry. Accordingly, class attendance and participation is required and will count as 25% of your total class grade. Attendance will be officially recorded 12 times, randomly distributed across the semester. **Students who are not present in class at the time attendance is taken will have an absence recorded.** I will allow 2 recorded absences without penalty. Each additional absence will lower this portion of your grade by 10 points (one letter grade). Exceptions to the 2 absence policy will be made at my discretion, only under exceptional circumstances with written documentation that clearly justifies your absences. **I will also monitor student participation, both in class and on the Blackboard discussion board, and adjust this portion of your grade in accordance with your level of participation throughout the semester.** If you have perfect attendance but never participate in class nor through the online discussion board, you will receive only a C average for this portion of your grade. In order to receive an A or B for this portion of your grade, you must not only have good attendance but also regularly participate in class discussions. A–level grades are reserved for those who provide excellent contributions to the course consistently throughout the semester. Doing so will not only improve your grade, but will also enable you to get the most out of this class, through active engagement with the course content. Students will not be dropped from this course for non-attendance. If you feel that you should drop due to missing too much of the course, it is your responsibility to do so.

**Short Assignments:** Throughout the semester I will ask you to complete various short assignments either in-class or at home, and either individually or in groups. For example, I might give a brief reading quiz that asks you to answer a question about the assigned reading, I might ask you to write a one page commentary on a reading assignment, or you may be required to participate in a group exercise in class regarding a particular viewpoint or problem. **Reading quizzes and other assignments will often occur in class without advance notice, so it is important that you keep up with the readings and regularly attend class.** Short Assignment credits will be recorded on a pass / fail basis. There will be a total of 12 possible credits across the semester. If you receive 10 or more credits, you will receive 100% credit for this portion of your grade. 9 credits will earn a 90, and so on. Using a 10 credit scale when 12 credits are available enables you to miss two quiz credits without penalty. For this reason, no make-up short assignments will be given.

**Reading Exams:** There will be two reading exams in this course, requiring you to identify the authors of selected quotes from the readings. The average of your two exam scores will constitute 25% of your total grade. The first reading exam will occur mid-semester (specific date to be determined) and the second will take place during finals week. Further details will be provided in class, with sufficient advance notice for you to be well-prepared. If you miss an exam for a justifiable reason that you can document (with a doctor’s note, for instance), it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to discuss alternative arrangements. Make-up exams will only be allowed under exceptional, justified, and documented circumstances at my discretion.

**Final Presentation and Project:** Students will be required to complete a self-defined course project constituting a 7 to 10 page paper (or equivalent work in another medium, such as a film or artwork, with the acceptance of the instructor), and also to give a 10 to 15 minute presentation to the class regarding the project content. Contingent upon instructor approval, students will be
free to choose the nature of their own project, as long as it somehow clearly relates to the course themes of self, identity, and self-knowledge. Presentations will be scheduled at the end of the semester and final projects will be due on the last day of class. Further details about presentations and projects will be provided in class.

**Reading Assignments**

Required reading assignments will be announced regularly in class as we progress through the semester, with all of the readings being provided online through Blackboard and/or the course website. Completing these assignments on time is an essential component of the class, so be sure to keep up with the readings as we go along. Reading intellectually complex work can be difficult, but here are some suggestions to help you with it:

1) **Read the material multiple times.** Do not expect yourself to fully grasp all of the ideas in a work the first time you read it. It can be helpful to first do a quick read of a complex work without getting bogged down in the details, just to get a “big picture” grasp of the ideas it presents. Then you can go back through the material to get a more in-depth understanding. In addition, I encourage you to read the material again after we have discussed it in class, to achieve a more developed understanding of the material.

2) **Actively engage with the material.** As you read, try to grasp, analyze, and assess the ideas and reasoning the author presents. Actively think about what you are reading and don’t be afraid to pause and ask questions. Take notes on the thoughts and questions that you have as you read, and bring them to class for discussion and clarification.

3) **Read supplemental material.** Do not limit yourself to just the required readings. Explore additional material regarding the concepts, viewpoints, authors, and theories we discuss, which will give you a more developed and complete engagement with the course material. Here are a few general online resources in philosophy that you might find helpful:

   - The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: [http://www.iep.utm.edu/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/)
   - Garth Kemerling’s Philosophy Pages: [http://www.philosophypages.com/](http://www.philosophypages.com/)

**Class Conduct and Policies**

**Punctuality:** You should be in your seat and ready for class at the beginning of class time. Repeated tardiness is a distraction to other students and will not be tolerated. Again, students who are not present in class at the time attendance is taken will have an absence recorded.

**Attention:** While in this class, your attention should be directed towards the class. Activities unrelated to the class (texting or other cellphone use, doing work for another class, reading a newspaper, playing a game, surfing the Internet, talking to your neighbor about things unrelated to class, etc.) are strictly prohibited during class time. Students who violate these policies may be asked to leave the classroom, and repeated violations may result in being asked to drop the class.

**Respect:** Be respectful of other students. It is appropriate and acceptable to question or criticize another person’s viewpoint on a class topic, but you should not criticize or attack your fellow
students themselves. There is a big difference between offering a criticism of a belief or viewpoint and attacking a person with the belief or viewpoint. The former is a legitimate and important component of philosophy, while the latter is impolite and inappropriate (as well as a fallacy, the “ad hominem” fallacy). Also, I expect students to respectfully listen and attend to fellow students engaged in class discussion, whether you agree, disagree, or are indifferent to their thoughts. We can all learn from the thoughts and viewpoints of others, and one goal of this class is to foster an environment where such learning can take place.

**Integrity:** The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student’s acceptance of this university policy.

**Harassment and Academic Policies:** No harassment of any kind will be tolerated in this class. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with all information contained in the Student Handbook, including the Sexual Harassment Policy and the various other policies concerning academics and the university. If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: https://uca.edu/titleix.*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

**Disabilities:** The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

**Emergencies:** An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

**Evaluations:** Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Please evaluate this course by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right during the evaluation period at the end of the semester.
Course Topics and Tentative Readings Outline
(Note: Particular assignments will be made in class as we progress through the material)

I. Course Introduction: What is a self? What is knowledge? What is self-knowledge?
   - Radiolab Episode 1: Who am I?
   - John Perry: *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*
   - Quassim Cassam: *Self-Knowledge for Humans* (Beginner's Guide)
   - Ulric Neisser: Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge

II. Ancient Legacies
   - Confucius: *The Great Learning*
   - Chuang tzu: Discussion on Making All Things Equal
   - *The Katha Upanishad*
   - Three Cardinal Discourses of the Buddha: *Setting Rolling the Wheel of Truth, The Not-Self Characteristic*, and *The Fire Sermon*
   - Plato: *Phaedo*
   - Aristotle: *De Anima*

III. Medieval, Modern, and Contemporary Christian Views of Human Existence
   - St. Augustine: *Confessions*, Book X
   - René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First and Second Meditations
   - John Locke: Of Identity and Diversity, from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
   - Lynne Rudder Baker: Should a Christian be a Mind-Body Dualist?

IV. Identity and the Self-Made Self in American Literature
   - Viola Cordova: *Who We Are: An Exploration of Identity from How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*
   - Frederick Douglass: Self-Made Men
   - Benjamin Franklin: Project for Moral Perfection from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
   - Sojourner Truth: In Her Words
   - Ralph Waldo Emerson: Self-Reliance
   - Philip K. Dick: The Android and the Human
   - Donna Haraway: A Cyborg Manifesto

V. The Frontiers of Self-Knowledge in Contemporary Philosophy and Science
   - Daniel Dennett: The Origins of Selves
   - Patricia Churchland: Self and Self-Knowledge, from *Brainwise: Studies in Neurophilosophy*
   - Shelley Taylor and Jonathon Brown: Illusion and Well-Being
   - Neera Badhwar: Is Realism Really Bad For You? A Realistic Response
   - Timothy D. Wilson and Elizabeth Dunn: Self-Knowledge: Its Limits, Value, and Potential for Improvement