1. **Basic Course Info**

**Prof. Information:**
- **Prof:** Dr. Joshua May
- **Office:** Humanities Bldg. Rm. 425
- **Email:** joshmay@uab.edu
- **Website:** www.joshdmay.com
- **Office Hours:** T&R 2-3pm (& by appt.)

**Lecture Info:**
- **Section 1G:** MWF 2:30pm – 3:20pm
  - **Location:** Education Bldg. Rm. 145
- **Section 2D:** TR 12:30pm – 1:45pm
  - **Location:** Education Bldg. Rm. 133

**Course Website:** Blackboard

**Course Description**

Ever wondered if you have free will? If God exists? If a machine could possibly be conscious in the way you are? Whether you’re not really dreaming right now? Whether you can survive the death of your body in some form of after-life? In this course, students will be introduced to some famous discussions of these questions within the discipline of philosophy (of the western, “analytic” sort). The introduction will be to both the characteristic methods and works in the discipline. We will do this by understanding and evaluating arguments in some of the major fields of philosophy: epistemology (knowledge), metaphysics (nature), and ethics (norms).

The main topics we’ll cover in the course are:

1. **Free Will:** Can we have free will or be responsible for anything if everything is determined?
2. **Mind:** Is a mind a physical thing? Could a machine truly think?
3. **Ethics:** What should I do? Why should I be moral? Are we all ultimately just self-interested?
4. **Immortality:** Can we survive the death of our bodies? A brain transplant? Teleportation?
5. **God:** Is there any compelling evidence for or against the existence of a God?
6. **Knowledge:** Do we know anything? Do you really know that you’re not now dreaming?

The material covered will include selections from both current and historically important philosophers. We will also read some short stories to introduce each topic.

**Required Texts**

   - (Available at Snoozy’s Bookstore: 1321 10th Ave. S.)
   - (Don’t use the previous edition, as the readings have changed.)

2. A few additional readings will be provided on the Blackboard course page.

**Course Requirements**

1. **Participation, Etc.** (in class) 10% of grade (Due: N/A) [weekly]
2. **Quizzes (x6)** (in class) 20% of grade (Due: See Schedule) [=biweekly]
3. **Mid-Term** (in class) 30% of grade (Date: Oct. 9 or 10) [7th week]
4. **Final Exam** (in class) 40% of grade (Date: Dec. 12 or 13) [15th week]

*Note: These due dates are pretty firm, but they are subject to minor changes.*
**Material Covered**
We will be discussing material primarily from the text. However, we may not cover everything in the assigned reading, and quite often material will be brought up in lecture that is not in the readings. So it’s crucial that you come to class. Likewise, there may be some material in the readings you’ll be accountable for that we don’t discuss in great detail in lecture.

**Updates**
Electronic announcements and updates will be made occasionally on the Blackboard site. So do check the site frequently.

**Handouts/Slides**
There will be some handouts from time to time, and they will be available on the course Blackboard site. These are to help students catch up who miss class for legitimate reasons. I’m also doing this so students don’t have to take such copious notes during class. Keep in mind, though, the handouts will be rather bare. You’ll need to supplement them with your own notes from class.

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**2. Assignments**

**Participation, Etc.**
*Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to do so on time.* I will do roll call and track attendance (this isn’t just part of your grade; it’s also for me to learn names). More than 25 minutes late for class will be counted absent. Although I will allow 3 unexcused absences, missing 4 or more classes will likely make it difficult for you to do well in the course.

*Excused absences:* These require proper documentation for either jury duty (note from the court), military service (note from military superior), or required university-sponsored activities (documentation from UAB official or supervisor). Remember, students with excused absences are still required to complete work and readings by the required due dates.

*Participate in class discussion:* I’m very interested in what you think of our readings and any light you may have to shed on their meaning. This will be left fairly open, to be determined at my discretion. Attendance, tardiness, contribution to class discussion, and so on may all be factored in to some extent.

*Buddy system:* Early in the semester, I’ll set aside time for you to exchange contact information with some fellow classmates. When needed (e.g., if you have to miss class), get in touch with them to share notes or discuss the course material.

**Quizzes**
These will be either *multiple choice, short answer, or short essay* (or some combination), depending on the week. I’ll mix it up so there are a number of different testing methods used. So these may involve some *essay-style writing*, albeit in-class. I have two sections on very different schedules (MWF vs TR), but the quizzes for each will be at the end of the week listed below in the Schedule (so Thursday for Sect. 2D and Friday for Sect. 1G). In the end, I’ll drop your lowest quiz score (so they the grading will be out of 5 quizzes). Thus, you can miss one quiz without any penalty. No quizzes can be made up without very special circumstances.
**EXAMS**
Both the midterm and final exams will involve *multiple choice* questions and *short essays*. In advance of each of the exams, you will be given a handout on the exam format and sample questions. The exams will have no trick questions or obscure identifications.

**CLASS BEHAVIOR**
Turn off all electronic, hand-held devices during class. Texting, instant messaging, web surfing, message checking, e-mailing, and all other distractions to you or the class are not permitted. If you are taking notes on your laptop, please, no web browsing or game playing (better: turn off your wifi entirely). Think of the class meetings as a “philosophy retreat” where you focus on only philosophy. That’s not too much to ask.

Eating is permitted in class as long as it is not messy and done discreetly (i.e. without distraction to the rest of the class). If class is held in a computer room, however, no food or drink is allowed at all.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS**
In general, assume you cannot turn assignments in late. However, of course, if you have special circumstances, exceptions may be made. But you must let me know as soon as such special circumstances arise; otherwise I might not work something out with you. Making up an exam is a privilege, not a right. It is in your self-interest not to miss exams.

**CHEATING**
Don’t cheat (this includes *plagiarism*). I warn against this at the beginning of every semester, and still nearly every time at least one person gets caught! *I take this extremely seriously.* I will give all cheaters a failing grade for the course and report the incidents to the university.

Note that if you cut something from a Web document and paste it into your paper, you are plagiarizing (even if you mix up the wording a bit). The papers you will be asked to write are not research papers in that there is no need to look to outside sources (including anything on the Internet); you just need to read the material required for class, attend the lectures, and take your time thinking it all through. But if you do poke around the Web, you must of course diligently cite and quote all consulted sources.

Furthermore, it’s your responsibility to make sure that your work doesn’t violate university policies about plagiarism and other academic cheating. *(Compare: Ignorance of the law does not excuse.)* If you need any help in understanding these standards or are in any doubt about whether your work for this course violates them, check with me. For your convenience, here is the link to UAB’s page on academic integrity:

[https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/honor-code](https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/honor-code)

All UAB students are expected to be familiar with the UAB Academic Honor Code, as well as any honor codes that are specific to their schools or disciplines. The code represents a commitment to integrity in the academic community and a respect for an individual’s educational endeavors:

_I have read and, by choosing to become a member of the UAB academic community, accept the UAB Academic Honor Code. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as expulsion from the university. I promise and confirm that I will not, at any time and under any circumstances, involve myself with abetting, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham._
CALCULATING YOUR GRADE
All scores will be out of 100 (in other words, a percentage). To calculate your grade, multiply the percentage weight for each assignment by your score (out of 100) for that assignment, then add up the results for each assignment. Finally, convert that total score for the course into a letter grade using standard conversions (e.g. 92%=A-, 87%=B+, etc.). The following chart is an example to help illustrate how to do the calculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Multiplier</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>19.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>80% (B-)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. STUDENT SUPPORT

OFFICE HOURS
I encourage you all to talk with me outside of class (e.g. in office hours). If you are unable to see me during my regular slot or talk to me before or after class, I’m happy to schedule a mutually convenient time. Talking to me about the material, especially in preparation for an upcoming assignment, is not just for those who fear failing the course; it’s also for those who want to secure an “A” (or whatever your goal is).

EMAILING ME
I’m available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions that way. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, talk to me in person.

COURSE WEB PAGE
The web page for this class has some links that may prove useful in the course. (Note: My personal website also has some information and links to several resources for philosophy. However, browse at your own risk. What is particularly useful for this course will be provided on the web page for this course, not my personal website.)

WRITING SUPPORT
I will be expecting you to write college-level papers for this course, so I will be expecting few errors in the areas of spelling, grammar, professional academic style, and so on. Furthermore, writing in philosophy is often very different from writing in other disciplines. Since philosophy requires the clear communication of often difficult and subtle ideas, weak writing renders high level performance impossible. So I encourage you to talk to me about your paper (and exams) before the due date if you have any questions. (More details on requirements for papers will be provided later on in the course.)

In general, I am happy to discuss with you drafts of your papers before they are turned in. However, I will not accept emailed or dropped off drafts. Instead, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your drafts into office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss them.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES
If for any reason you are struggling—due to medical issues or otherwise—get in touch with me as soon as possible. I’m happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But you must get in touch as soon as you know there is a problem. Waiting until the last minute, for example, might mean we can’t work anything out.
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
If you are registered with Disability Support Services (DSS), please make an appointment as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary for this course. If you have a disability but have not yet contacted DSS, please contact them as soon as possible (934-4205) or visit them (at 516 Hill University Center). Remember that special accommodations for students with disabilities are not retroactive. Students must obtain an accommodation letter from DSS at the beginning of each semester, get that letter to the instructor, and contact the instructor several days before the accommodation is required. Please see DSS FAQ’s at:

https://www.uab.edu/students/services/disability-support-services

4. READINGS

WHEN TO READ
Students are expected to do the assigned reading. You should aim for doing the reading the day it’s covered in class—or at least around that time. The point of this is: don’t give up on the reading. If you didn’t get to it before we covered it in class, make sure you do it after. This is especially important because philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments. However, you aren’t expected to have figured it all out before you walk in the door. That’s what we’re going to try to do in class. (Notice also that I’ve provided the page numbers of each reading so you can see the length and plan ahead.)

Some Advice: Don’t underestimate the power of mental fatigue. When reading, if you find that you can’t process it, try reading it again. If you still feel rather lost, it might be that you’re getting mentally exhausted. Try putting the book down and coming back to it later, even perhaps the next day. It’s quite likely that you’ll find it much easier after a break.

READING LIST
The list of readings below is subject to change. All readings are in the course text, unless marked “PDF” (in which case I’ll make them available to you online). We’ll try to go through these articles following this exact schedule, but it is not set in stone. You’ll need to come to class to know where we are exactly.

Topic 1: Introduction: Arguments
2. Portions of KNN (2013) Ch. 1, “Introduction” (pp. 1-4) [5 pp.]
3. Plato, Euthyphro (PDF, excerpt) [8 pp.]
4. Portions of KNN (2013) Ch. 1, “Introduction” (pp. 5-10) [6 pp.]

Topic 2: Do We Have Free Will?
1. Dick, Philip K. (1954) “Adjustment Team” (pp. 178-195) [17 pp.] — optional
2. All of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 4, (pp. 167-178) [11 pp.]
4. Anscombe, Elizabeth (1971) “Causality and Determination, Part 2” (PDF excerpt) [10 pp.]
**Topic 3: Can Machines Think?**
1. Bisson, Terry (1990) “They’re Made Out of Meat” (pp. 96-98) [2 pp.]
2. All of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 3 (pp. 86-96) [10 pp.]
4. Turing, Alan (1950) “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (pp. 126-138) [10 pp.]

**Topic 4: What’s Right and Wrong?**
1. Plato (360 BCE) “The Myth of Gyges” (pp. 376-378) [2 pp.]
2. May, Josh (2011) “Psychological Egoism” (PDF excerpt) [10 pp.]
3. Butler, Joseph (1726) “Sermon XI—Upon the Love of Our Neighbor” (PDF) [7 pp.]
4. All of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 7 (pp. 367-375) [8 pp.]
6. Mill, John Stuart (1863) “In Defense of Utilitarianism” (pp. 391-398) [8 pp.]

**Topic 5: Can We Survive the Death of Our Bodies?**
1. Phol & Kornbluth (1972) “The Meeting” (pp. 28-36) [8 pp.]
2. All of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 2 (pp. 19-27) [8 pp.]
3. Locke, John (1690) “The Prince and the Cobbler” (pp. 48-51) [4 pp.]
4. Reid, Thomas (1785) “Of Mr. Locke’s Account of Our Personal Identity” (PDF) [4 pp.]
5. Parfit, Derek (1995) “The Unimportance of Identity” (pp. 80-85) [6 pp.]

**Topic 6: Is There a God?**
1. Dostoevsky (1880) “Rebellion” (pp. 259-262) [4 pp.]
2. Portions of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 5 (pp. 252-259) [8 pp.]
3. Pascal, Blaise (1670) “The Wager” (pp. 283-285) [3 pp.]
4. Paley, William (1802) “The Teleological Argument” (pp. 270-275) [6 pp.]
   (first 6 pages for argument; final 10 pages for objections & replies)

**Topic 7: Do We Know Anything? Is Life Just a Dream?**
1. Plato (380 BCE) “Allegory of the Cave” (PDF) [6 pp.]
2. Portions of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 6 (pp. 317-20, 322-5) [8 pp.]
4. Portions of KNN (2013) Introduction to Ch. 6, (pp. 320-2, 325-8) [7 pp.]
5. Descartes, René (1641) “Within the Sphere of the Doubtful” (pp. 332-342) [10 pp.]
6. Unger, Peter (1975) “A Defense of Skepticism” (pp. 349-354) [5 pp.]
## Schedule

(Note: Subject to minor revision. Keep coming to class to know where we are.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings*</th>
<th>Key Events**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/26-30</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1.1–1.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9/2-6</td>
<td>Free Will: Predictability</td>
<td>2.1–2.4</td>
<td>Quiz 1: Sept. 5 or 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(<em>No class 9/2</em>)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/9-13</td>
<td>Free Will: Compatibility</td>
<td>2.5–2.6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/16-20</td>
<td>Thinking Machines: Dualism</td>
<td>3.1–3.3</td>
<td>Quiz 2: Sept. 19 or 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/23-27</td>
<td>Thinking Machines: Pro/Con</td>
<td>3.4–3.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9/30-10/4</td>
<td>Ethics: Self-Interest</td>
<td>4.1–4.3</td>
<td>Quiz 3: Oct. 3 or 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/7-11</td>
<td>Review for Midterm</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Midterm: Oct. 9 or 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(<em>No class 10/11</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/14-18</td>
<td>Ethics: Ends vs Means</td>
<td>4.4–4.8</td>
<td>Quiz 4: Oct. 24 or 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/21-25</td>
<td>Immortality: Mind</td>
<td>5.1–5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/28-11/1</td>
<td>Immortality: Against</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/4-8</td>
<td>God: Arguments For</td>
<td>6.1–6.3</td>
<td>Quiz 5: Nov. 7 or 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/11-15</td>
<td>God: Arguments Against</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/18-22</td>
<td>Knowledge: Its Nature</td>
<td>7.1–7.3</td>
<td>Quiz 6: Nov. 21 or 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>12/2-6</td>
<td>Knowledge: Skepticism</td>
<td>7.4-7.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12/9-13</td>
<td>Final Exam: Sect. 2D: 12/12 10:45am-1:15pm</td>
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<td>Sect. 1G: 12/13 1:30-4:00pm</td>
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* Readings identified by numbers (e.g. 2.2=Topic 2, Reading 2). Read those during that week.

** Remember: Quizzes and exams are on different days depending on your section. Infer which date applies to you based on what days your section meets (MWF or TR).