

Philosophy 109
First-Year Seminar:
The Self
Spring 2021

<https://northwestern.zoom.us/j/99675739414>

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Office hours are Tuesday 12-2, at this Zoom link: <https://northwestern.zoom.us/j/91368514564>

Also available by appointment, please just contact me by email to arrange

Readings:

Required textbooks:

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, Martino Fine Books 2011 (You may also purchase *Quicksand* as part of a volume of Nella Larsen's complete fiction.)

Available online through the library at:

https://search.library.northwestern.edu/permalink/01NWU_INST/h04e76/alma9980303789002441

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. Donald M. Frame, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958.

Available online through the library at:

https://search.library.northwestern.edu/permalink/01NWU_INST/h04e76/alma9981570270602441

Articles available online:

W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Strivings of the Negro People," *The Atlantic Monthly* August 1897, 194-197. Available here:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/08/strivings-of-the-negro-people/305446/>

Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-traveling, and Loving Perception," *Hypatia* 2:2 (1987), 3-19. (Accessible through Northwestern library.)

Andrea Westlund, "Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?" *Philosophical Review* 112:4 (2003), 483-523. (Accessible through Northwestern library.)

And, as recommended reading (not required):

Valerie Tiberius, “Bad Memories, Good Decisions, and the Three Joels,” in Christopher Grau, ed., *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Routledge, 2009), 62-79. This book is available online through Northwestern Library.

On Canvas, in Course Reserves:

Selections from:

David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40)

John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690, but our selection was added in the second edition of 1694)

Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785)

Charlie Kaufman, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Universal Studios 2004.

On Canvas, under Files:

Introduction handout

Quotation and Citation handout

Standard Paper format handout

Summary handout

Course description:

In this course, we will read and discuss some classic philosophical treatments of the self, as well as artistic representations of selfhood. In engaging with these readings, we may discuss questions such as: what is the relationship between the self and the soul, or the self and the body? Is the self constituted by memory, or by caring about its future? Is reflection or self-awareness necessary for selfhood? Is the self independent of education, social relations, and the opinions of others, or necessarily formed and defined by them? Are there wrong or failed ways to be a self, or to be related to one’s self? How much can one change or improve one’s self, and if so, how?

As is standard for first-year seminars, the course also provides the opportunity to work on writing skills. In particular, the course includes writing assignments that focus on particular tasks or parts of papers and build towards a final paper on an independently developed topic. These writing assignments include peer commentary tasks, not only to promote discussion and reflection about writing (and about the texts written about), but also to hone crucial skills of constructively critical attention to writing.

Assignments:

Readings and course participation: You are expected to do all the readings carefully and critically and to participate in class discussion. Participation may include contributions to debates and/or small group presentations in class.

Comments: you are required to write **eleven** comments concerning the assigned readings; these are to be submitted on Canvas by **9 a.m.** on the day for which the reading is assigned (i.e., ½ hour before the class is held). You are allowed two times “off” from this assignment (there are 13 assignment slots on Canvas; you are required to do 11 among them). These comments should be, approximately, between two sentences and one paragraph long, and are opportunities for you to think “out loud,” raise questions, point to parts of the readings you found particularly interesting, difficult, stupid, etc. They may be submitted as audio recordings or typed comments.

You will receive full credit for all comments that honestly and seriously engage with the reading material assigned for that day. Please do take this assignment as an opportunity to ask about whatever you find puzzling. No credit will be given for comments submitted later than 9 a.m. on the day for which the reading is assigned or after May 27, or for comments that do not concern the reading assigned for the day. It is advisable to have these comments in a separate file, from which you can copy and paste to post on Canvas, and which you can keep for your records.

Three writing assignments: writing exercises, with multiple parts, graded on a check/plus/minus basis. For due dates, see reading schedule below. These will mostly be submitted on discussion boards (on Canvas).

Two papers (4-6 pp. each); due dates below, to be submitted on Canvas.

Grading policies:

Grades will be based on the above assignments: 50% for the papers, 30% for writing assignments and comments, 20% for participation. (See attendance and participation policy below.)

Paper grading scale: Papers are graded according to how well the two main aims of a paper (see “standard paper form” document, in Files on Canvas) are accomplished: 1) accurate, pointed summary of the argument or position in the text, with appropriately formatted textual evidence, and 2) an argument of your own concerning that position. In more detail, grading will track the following, usually cumulative stages of achievement:

F one begins here (having done nothing).

C is earned by providing a basic, accurate summary of the text, supported by quotations/citations in correct format.

B- reflects the paper’s attempt then to make an argument concerning that position.

B is earned by *successfully* making an argument (e.g., raising a cogent objection) concerning the accurately summarized, presented position = having done a satisfactory job at both central aims of the paper.

B+ reflects a more detailed, sophisticated summary or argument (e.g., considering a possible response to the objection), that is, supreme competence.

A and A- are earned by details and sophistication, *plus* creativity, acuity of argument, intellectual risk-taking, depth of insight beyond well done, satisfactory work, that is, excellence.

Grading policy, cont: There will be a grading penalty on all papers and writing assignments that omit textual quotation/citation, and that do not follow guidelines in the quotation and citation handout.

Late paper policy: Late papers will be graded 1/3 grade lower for every day that they are late. For example, a B+ paper would receive a B if one day late; a B- if two days late, etc. Writing assignments must be handed in on time; they will not be accepted, nor receive credit, if handed in late.

Attendance and Participation Policy: You are expected to attend every class; no positive credit is accrued simply for attending (it is mandatory) and a number of unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. Participation is a **positive or negative** element of your grade: you will receive a point for every class period in which you actively and pertinently participate and no point if you do not participate. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, please let me know in advance; the absence will be excused, though obviously you cannot receive any participation credit. Accommodations will be made for those who cannot attend owing to time zone differences or other pandemic-related difficulties; please contact me at r-zuckert@northwestern.edu to make these arrangements.

Class Behavior Policy: please resist the great temptations offered by the online class environment. That is, please refrain from engaging in any form of electronic communication (texting, emailing, etc.) during class, as well as from other distracting uses of your computer (web-browsing, social media, etc.). All cell phones should be put away during class meetings. Standard rules of classroom decorum hold in this new environment as well: not to interrupt or talk over classmates, and to exercise civility toward one another and intellectual charity toward one another's ideas.

Accessibility: Northwestern University is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact AccessibleNU to move forward with the university's established accommodation process (email: accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; phone: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with AccessibleNU, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we can work together to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations, is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Statement concerning Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is a serious violation of the trust, honesty, and openness of inquiry required for true intellectual community. Students in this course are required to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide". All papers submitted for credit in this course must be submitted electronically via Canvas and may be tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern or to download the guide, visit:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html>

To avoid any misunderstanding, here are a few remarks concerning appropriate use of sources for written work in this course. All papers should include quotations from a text that we have discussed in class, in appropriate format (see quotations/citation handout). Consultation of secondary sources is not required. Use of web sources, except the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, is strongly discouraged. However, if you do consult secondary sources, you should provide full bibliographical information for all such sources at the end of your paper. Any word-for-word reproduction of text from a secondary source in your paper should be marked as a quotation (by quotation marks or indentation, as appropriate), and bibliographical information should be appended in parentheses or footnotes. If you learn of an argument or way of interpreting a text (etc.) from such a source, and make that point in your paper, you should cite that source, in a footnote appended to the part of the text in which you present the point, even if you do not quote from that source word for word. A final note: if your paper includes lengthy quotations – e.g., full paragraphs – from other sources or from a primary text, this indicates that you are not articulating your own views, in your own words, sufficiently.

Recording Policy: In accord with NU recommendations, this class will be recorded for educational purposes. These recordings are accessible via the Canvas (Zoom/Cloud recordings) and will be shared only with students enrolled in the course. They will be deleted at the end of the quarter. Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including advising sessions or office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact Accessible NU (see above). Unauthorized use of classroom recordings – including distributing or posting them – is also prohibited. Under the University’s copyright policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

Support for Wellness and Mental Health: Northwestern University is committed to supporting the wellness of our students. Student Affairs has multiple resources to support student wellness and mental health. If you are feeling distressed or overwhelmed, please reach out for help. Students can access confidential resources through the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Religious and Spiritual Life (RSL) and the Center for Awareness, Response and Education (CARE). Additional information on all of the resources mentioned above can be found here:

<https://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life/>

<https://www.northwestern.edu/care/>

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Nb: All class meetings may be accessed from the Zoom link at the top of this syllabus, or via our Canvas site (under Zoom in the left navigation column).

Nb2: readings are due and will be discussed in class on the date they are listed here.

Nb3: classes marked with * will end at 10:25; classes marked with (d) will switch over to break out rooms/peer discussions at 10:20 in order to complete the assignments

April 1 Introduction

April 6 No class.

Please read writing handouts on Canvas (in Files or General Class Materials Module): 1) standard paper form and aims; 2) quotation and citation handout; 3) summary handout; 4) summary assignment (available as document in Files or as discussion board prompt). Please also watch Panopto videos (in General Class Materials Module) concerning them (3 and 4 are discussed together).

***April 8** Montaigne, *Essays*, “To the Reader” and Book I, Essays 1-8 = epages (in electronic library copy) 21-41.

Please also be ready to ask questions/follow ups concerning the writing handouts/Panoptos – most immediately to make sure everyone is ready for the summary assignment.

***April 13** Montaigne, *Essays*, Book I, Essays 14, 17, 19, and 20 pp. 60-61. Recommended: Book I, essay 50.

= epages 53-65, 69-71, 74-75, 79-81 (to end of second paragraph). Recommended = epages 236-238.

Summary assignment part 1 due (on Canvas discussion board).

(d) April 15 Montaigne, *Essays*, Book I, essays 21-23. Recommended: Book I, essay 31.

= epages 88-108. Recommended = epages 165-173.

Summary assignment part 2 due. Part 3 to be completed at end of class on basis of discussion. (Both on Canvas discussion board.)

April 20 Montaigne, *Essays*, Book I, Essay 26, pp. 106-116 (bottom), 128 (top)- 131, and Essays 28, 35, 37.

= epages 125-134 (top), 143 (bottom)-147, 151-159, 181, 185-187.

Please also review argument assignment, and watch Panopto video about it – so that we can discuss any questions/issues in class.

***April 22** Montaigne, *Essays*, Book I, Essays 41, 46; Book II, Essay 16, pp. 468-69 (middle), and Essay 18; Book III, Essay 2, pp. 610-612 (middle) and 617 (“As for me...”)–620 (middle). Recommended:

Montaigne's negative self-description in Book II, Essay 17, pp. 478-81, 485-87, 495- 497.

= epages 203-204, 217-220, 468-469 (top), 500-503, 605-607 (middle), 611 ("As for me...")-614 (bottom). Recommended = epages 478-481 (bottom), 484 (very bottom)-485 (middle), 492 (top)-494 (middle).

Argument assignment part 1 due (on Canvas discussion board).

(d) April 27 John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 27: on personal identity, §§1-5 (skim), §§ 6-10, 14-19. (On Canvas in Course Reserves.)

Argument assignment part 2 due. Part 3 to be completed at the end of class, on basis of discussion. (Both to be submitted on Canvas discussion board.)

***April 29** Locke, *Essay*, §§22-23, 26. (On Canvas in Course Reserves.)

David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, section VI, pp. 251-55 (on Canvas in Course Reserves).

Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Book III, chapter 6. (On Canvas in Course Reserves.)

***May 4** *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (discussion; please make sure to watch before class, available for streaming from Canvas, in Course Reserves).

Recommended: Tiberius, "Bad Memories, Good Decisions, and the Three Joels," especially pp. 73-78. Available online through Northwestern library; see above in the reading list.

May 6 Du Bois, "The Strivings of the Negro People," *The Atlantic Monthly* August 1897, 194-197. (Link above in reading list.)

Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-traveling, and Loving Perception," *Hypatia* 2:2 (1987), 3-19. (Available online, via the library.)

Paper 1 due.

May 11 no class.

May 13 Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*, chapters 1-12.

May 18 Larsen, *Quicksand*, chapters 13-25.

Please take a look before class at the paper topic development assignment, part 1, so that you can raise any questions you have about it in class.

May 20 Paper-Topic-Development and Introduction Writing Assignment part 1 due (have write-up ready to use for class). In class, we will discuss the assignment.

***May 25** Andrea Westlund, “Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?” pp. 483-490. Available online through the library.

P-T-D writing assignment part 2 due (submitted on Canvas discussion board).

(d) May 27 Westlund, “Selflessness,” pp. 494 (last paragraph)-502, 507-515.

P-T-D writing assignment part 3 due. Part 4 to be completed at the end of class, on basis of discussion. (Both to be submitted on Canvas discussion board.)

June 1 No class. I will be available for final writing consultations; class time will be used like office hours for this purpose.

Paper 2 due at 11:59 p.m., submitted to Canvas.