Contact Information:

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Office Hours: Mondays noon; or else by appointment.

Course Description:

This course will consider many central issues in the philosophy of mind by focussing on the special case of belief. We start by considering whether a person has voluntary control of what she believes and what might hang on such control. We then consider whether everything possible is believable. Next, we consider what a person must believe, and conclude by considering what a person ought to believe. A recurring theme will be that the limits to belief figure in both the objectivity and the subjectivity of belief.

Evaluation Scheme:

Grades will be determined in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due Date and Submission Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Preps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Due at noon on seminar day. Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 150-200 word exegesis on one of the readings for that week, <em>in advance of the class meeting.</em></td>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Paper (1500-2000 words)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>TBD Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric. This paper is purely exegetical.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (2500-3000 words)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>TBD (probably December 10th, 12:00pm) Your papers must be submitted through Turnitin on D2L.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I will distribute suggested essay topics and a grading rubric. This paper must develop and defend a position.</td>
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**SEMINAR PREPS:** You must hand in a seminar prep each week. If you hand in 5 or fewer, then you lose a full grade point on your final grade: e.g., from A to B. If you hand in 6-9, then you lose 1/3 grade point: e.g.,
from A to A-. You may only hand in ONE per week. I do not provide comments on them. Their entire purpose is to prove to me that you prepared for the seminar by carefully studying one of the readings.

Course Policies for PH 8104:

Late Penalty

- Assignments submitted late without sufficient justification will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day, including weekends.

Alternate Arrangements

- Students shall inform the instructor, in advance, when they will miss a deadline for (1) medical reasons; (2) compassionate reasons; or (3) reasons covered under Ryerson’s policy concerning accommodation of student religious, aboriginal, and spiritual observance. When circumstances do not permit informing the instructor in advance (e.g. in an emergency), the student must inform the instructor as soon as possible. Students who fail to abide by this requirement will be assigned a late penalty. Alternate arrangements may include the setting of a make-up test or assignment; transferring the weight of a missed test or assignment to another test or assignment, or extending a deadline. Ryerson’s policy concerning alternate arrangements for medical and compassionate reasons may be found at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol134.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol134.pdf). Ryerson’s policy concerning accommodation of student religious, aboriginal, and spiritual observance may be found at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol150.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol150.pdf).

(1) Medical Considerations: In order for alternate arrangements to be made on medical grounds, the student must supply the instructor with a Ryerson Medical Certificate, or a letter on letterhead from a physician with the student declaration portion of the Ryerson Medical Certificate attached. The Ryerson Medical Certificate may be found at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf).

(2) Compassionate Considerations: In order for alternate arrangements to be made on compassionate grounds, the student must supply the instructor with documentation supporting the claim, where possible.

(3) Religious, Aboriginal, and Spiritual Observance: Students are strongly encouraged to notify instructors of an observance accommodation issue within the first two weeks of classes. Requests for accommodation of observance can be made informally or formally to the instructor. Informal requests will be made verbally through private discussion or through an email between the student and instructor. For formal requests, student must submit a clear explanation of the observance and requested accommodation along with a copy of the Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance form, which may be found at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/relobservforminstr.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/relobservforminstr.pdf).

- Alternate arrangements will only be made on the basis of circumstances that are both (1) legitimate and (2) unforeseeable. Some examples of circumstances that typically fail to meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, multiple deadlines, and computer malfunctions.

Academic Misconduct

- For detailed information concerning academic misconduct and the relevant penalties, see Ryerson University’s Student Code of Academic Conduct at [www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf](http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf).
Students should be aware that the instructor reserves the right to conduct an oral examination on the contents of any submitted assignment.

PH 8106: Provisional Schedule of Topics and Readings

All readings not linked on this syllabus will be posted on the D2L site for this course. Students are expected to bring the readings to class each week, in either paper or electronic form. The list of readings below may be revised as the course progresses, depending on the interests of the class and the pace of discussion.

Useful secondary/background literature:
- Engel, Pascal. Belief. Oxford Bibliographies online. (Ask me for a copy.)

**The Nature of Believing**

**Sept. 6: Intro to course; Belief and the Cartesian legacy.**

**Sept. 13: 20th century causal and functionalist views.**

**Sept. 20: Dispositional views.**
- Ryle, G. *The Concept of Mind*. Chapter 5

**Voluntarism and Belief**

**Sept. 27**

**Oct. 4**

**Oct. 11 NO CLASSES**
Norms of Belief

Oct 18 What a person ought to believe


Oct 25 Rational belief and evidence


Nov 1 Rational belief without evidence


Inference

Nov. 8 What is inference?

- Carroll, Lewis. TBD
- Stroud, Barry TBD

Nov. 15 Theoretical and Practical Inference (3 weeks)

- Thomson, J.J. 1962. *Practical Reasoning*. The Philosophical Quarterly, 12(49) 316-328
  - Secondary reading:

Nov. 22 Rational causation


Nov. 29 TBD