

# SYLLABUS

## Class Meetings

Monday/Wednesday, 1:40-3:00pm, HLL 09

## Contact information

Instructor: Dr. Julien Musolino

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Office hours: by appointment

## REQUIREMENTS

### READING

No textbook has been assigned for this course. Instead, required readings (in the form of PDF files) are posted on SAKAI. In addition, I will mention a number of books throughout the class, bearing on various topics that we will discuss, any of which students are welcome to purchase and read. None of these books are required.

### EXAMS AND GRADES

Grades will be determined by performance on the following activities:

- **Quizzes**

There will be three quizzes taken in class on **Oct. 01, Oct. 27, and Nov. 24**. Details will be discussed in class.

- **Final Presentation**

Each student will be asked to pair up with another class member and jointly deliver a **15 minute oral presentation** on a relevant topic of their choosing (see Schedule of Topics, Readings, and other Activities for dates – **prior approval of instructor for selected topic will be needed**). The presentation will be evaluated on the basis of content, coherence, originality, and delivery.

### - **Final Report**

In addition to the joint oral presentation, each student will have to produce a separate, two-page, written report summarizing their presentation. Since these reports are short, the writing style and logical structure will be very important. A model will be provided which describes the main components and structure of such reports.

### - **Class participation**

One of the main goals of this course is to foster dialogue among class participants and between students and their instructor. Consequently, your participation in the discussion will be vital to the success of the course. Please also note that you will be **explicitly asked to state your views** on the topics to be discussed. Since the class is designed to tackle controversial issues, it is crucial that class participants approach these discussions **respectfully, calmly** and **rationally**. My assessment of your class participation will not only take into account your willingness to express yourself but also the tone and the manner in which you conduct yourself during discussions.

### - **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend every class barring exceptional circumstances which will have to be **documented** (e.g., medical issues, etc.). Undocumented absences, or absences for which the justification is not deemed valid, will count against final grades at the instructor's discretion.

### **Grades will be computed using the following weights**

- Quizzes (1/4 of final grade)
- Final Presentation (1/4 of final grade)
- Final Report (1/4 of final grade)
- Class participation (1/4 of final grade)
- Attendance

## **Percentages converted to grades**

90% -100% ---	A
87% - 89% ---	B+
80% - 86% ---	B
77% - 79% ---	C+
70% - 76% ---	C
60% - 69% ---	D
59% - 0% ---	F

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Exams and assignments**

Barring exceptional circumstances, all exams and assignments will be taken on the date they are assigned.

### **Academic Honesty**

Students in this class are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and respect. Conduct other than this will be disciplined following procedures detailed in Rutgers University policy on such matters. Academic dishonesty is defined as, but not limited to, plagiarism, harassment, cheating, disrupting behavior, or representing another student's work as your own. For further information on this topic, please visit:

<http://ctaar.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>

### **Religious observances**

Rutgers University's policy on accommodations for religious observances or holidays is available at the following site:

<http://registrar.rutgers.edu/NB/ENROL-NB.HTM#religious>

# Schedule of Topics, Readings & Other activities

## Fall 2014

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments & Activities
1	Sept 03	<b>Introduction</b>	
2	Sept 08 Sept 10	<b><u>PART 1: FOUNDATIONS</u></b> LIFTING THE VEIL – an overview of the issues, the approach, the tone, and the implications	- <b>Introducing yourself</b> - <b>Taking the soul questionnaire</b> <u>Reading:</u> Atheist as the other <u>Reading:</u> Worse than creationism
3	Sept 15 Sept 17	THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE – history of soul beliefs, the modern soul, defining the dualistic and materialistic hypotheses	<u>Reading:</u> the perimeter of ignorance - <b>Topic selection for class presentation</b>
4	Sept 22 Sept 24	THE FIRST PRINCIPLE – the tools we need to embark on our soul-searching quest	<u>Reading:</u> Religion, morality, and evolution
5	Sept 29 Oct 01	<b><u>PART II: INVESTIGATIONS</u></b> <b>Quiz 1</b>	- <b>Your views on the issues</b> <u>Reading:</u> Has science killed the soul? Pinker/Dawkins debate
6	Oct 06 Oct 08	DUALISM ON TRIAL – at critical look at the alleged evidence for the existence of the soul	<u>Reading:</u> Nothing paranormal about near death experiences
7	Oct 13 Oct 15	REQUIEM FOR THE SOUL – an examination of the soul hypothesis in light of what modern science has revealed to us.	<u>Reading:</u> when did we become so special? <u>Reading:</u> The mind-body problem and the second law of thermodynamics
8	Oct 20 Oct 22	LA METTRIE’S REVENGE – an overview of the evidence supporting the materialistic hypothesis	<u>Reading:</u> Knowing where to scratch <u>Reading:</u> Social Neuroscience and the soul’s last stand
9	Oct 27 Oct 29	<b>Quiz 2</b> <b><u>PART III: IMPLICATIONS</u></b> DESCARTES’ SHADOW – implications of the demise of the	- <b>Your views on the issues</b> <u>Reading:</u> Computational theory of mind <u>Reading:</u> Childhood origins of

		soul, part 1: (a) what is mind?, (b) where do soul beliefs come from?, and (c) the problem of consciousness	adult resistance to science
10	Nov 03 Nov 05	THE SUM OF ALL FEARS – implications, part 2. We lose nothing from letting go of our soul beliefs	<b>Reading:</b> self is magic - Wegner <b>Reading:</b> Moral decision-making and the brain
11	Nov 10 Nov 12	IMAGINE – implications, part 3: what we stand to gain by letting go of our soul beliefs. Three gifts from science and reason and a new narrative for the human species	<b>Reading:</b> For the law, neuroscience changes everything and nothing <b>Reading:</b> Morality, by Johnathan Haidt
12	Nov 17 Nov 19	<b>Student presentations</b> <b>Student presentations</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Sam Harris epilogue
13	Nov 24 Nov 26	<b>Quiz 3</b> <b>Student presentations</b>	
14	Dec 01 Dec 03	<b>Students presentations</b> <b>Students presentations</b>	
15	Dec 08 Dec 10	<b>Students presentations</b> <b>Final thoughts and Final reports due Dec 16</b>	<b>- Taking stock: your personal evolution this semester</b>