

RELATIVISM
PHIL308Y — Summer 2014 online

Instructor: John Holliday
Office: Online
Office Hours: T 10:00 – 11:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

We will examine relativism in its various guises, and with a particular concern for relativism of the full-blooded sort, the kind that claims there are no mind-independent facts of the matter about anything. Such a position seems difficult to tow and, in fact, most people doing philosophy in the Analytic tradition find it incoherent. Yet some seem to adhere to it vehemently. So an overarching question of this course is whether a full-blooded relativism can get off the ground. Along the way, we'll consider a number of relativist positions that have a narrower, and thus less controversial, focus.

REQUIRED TEXT

Krausz, Michael, editor. (2010) *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Course Requirement	Grade Percentage
Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Short Paper 1	20%
Short Paper 2	20%
Final Paper	40%

PARTICIPATION

Since the business of philosophy is understanding and engaging in arguments, discussion is absolutely crucial. Each week you are required to post at least four substantive questions or comments that either begin or continue a discussion thread on the course Facebook page pertaining to lecture or the readings for the week (where substantive just means anything that contributes something new to the discussion, however small of a point it may be). Two of these posts must be made by the end of Wednesday; the other two must be made by the end of Sunday (ideally, you should post the day or day after a lecture is released; but you won't be penalized if you don't). If you meet these requirements throughout the entire course, you will receive 100% for the participation course requirement. For every week you don't meet these requirements, your participation grade will be lowered 10%.

QUIZZES

Each Friday at 12:00 p.m. a True/False, 10-question quiz will be posted on the course ELMS site. It will concern only the material covered in the past week (in both lectures and the readings). You will have till 11:59 p.m. Sunday to take the quiz, after which the quiz will no longer be accessible. Once you access a quiz, you will have one minute per question to complete it. Once you exit a quiz, you will not be able to access it again. While taking the quiz, you may use the text and your notes, but you may not consult with anyone.

PAPERS

The short papers are each 700–1000 words (2–3 pages) and will be in response to prompts released one week before the papers' due dates. The final paper is 2000–3000 words (6–9 pages), and though it must engage in a debate covered in the course readings (i.e. argue for some substantive position or thesis), which one is entirely up to you. So as we work through the material, begin to consider what topic you would like to write on. Though you may use outside academic sources for the final paper, it is more than perfectly fine to limit your sources to what we read in the course. However, if you do choose to use outside sources, I ask that you use no more than three. All papers must be submitted on ELMS. Note: late papers will be accepted, but for every day a paper is late, the paper will be penalized by one full grade.

GRADING SYSTEM

Grades for all course requirements will be calculated in terms of raw percentages. Any course requirement not submitted will receive 0%. Final grades for the course will then be calculated as follows:

%	97	93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	55
letter	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

Note: undergraduate grades at the University of Maryland have recently roughly followed the following distribution:

A: ±45% B: ±30% C: ±15% Other (D, F, W): ±10%

This distribution will be considered when assigning final grades. Once grades for all course requirements have been determined, the instructor reserves the right to make adjustments before submitting final grades to the university. In other words, the instructor reserves the right to curve grades for the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to comply with the University of Maryland *Code of Academic Integrity*. Any violations of this *Code* will be confronted and referred to the Student Honor Council. As defined by the *Code*, “any of the following acts, when committed by a student, shall constitute academic dishonesty: (a) CHEATING: intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. (b) FABRICATION: intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. (c) FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code. (d) PLAGIARISM: intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise” (1). For more information on the *Code* or the Honor Council, visit <http://shc.umd.edu>.

SPECIAL NEEDS & SITUATIONS

If you require accommodations due to a disability (of any kind, physical or psychological), please notify me and contact the University’s Disability Support Service (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/>). In order to receive disability-related accommodations, you must provide appropriate documentation. If you are having difficulties keeping up with the academic demands of this course, contact the University’s Learning Assistance Service (<http://www.counseling.umd.edu/LAS/>). Their services are free to UMD students.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any of the course requirements due to religious observances, you are required to notify me of this *in advance*. If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any of the course requirements due to medical reasons, a note signed by a health care professional documenting the date of a medical appointment or time during which illness prevented the completion of course requirements must be scanned and sent to me electronically. If you are unable to meet the deadlines of any of the course requirements due to personal reasons, speak to me as soon as possible (some form of documentation will be required).

COURSE SCHEDULE

NOTE: all lectures will be posted on ELMS in the Modules section by 12:00 p.m. on the date listed.

WEEK ONE	
M 7/14	COURSE INTRODUCTION Introduce yourself on the class Facebook page.
W 7/16	LECTURE 1 Krausz, "Mapping Relativisms" (1)
F 7/18	LECTURE 2 Mandelbaum, "Subjective, Objective, and Conceptual Relativisms" (3) Quiz 1

WEEK TWO	
M 7/21	LECTURE 3 Boghossian, "Relativizing the Facts" (11)
W 7/23	LECTURE 4 Siegel, "Targets of Anti-Relativist Arguments" (12) Goodman, "Just the Facts, Ma'am!" (4)
F 7/25	LECTURE 5 Margolis, "The Truth About Relativism" (6) Quiz 2

WEEK THREE	
M 7/28	LECTURE 6 Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (8)
W 7/30	LECTURE 7 Putnam, "Truth and Convention" (9) Blackburn, "Conceptual Schemes" (10)
F 8/1	LECTURE 8 Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity" (25) Quiz 3 Short Paper 1 Due — 12:00 p.m.

WEEK FOUR	
M 8/4	LECTURE 9 Cartwright, “Relativism in Philosophy of Science” (5)
W 8/6	LECTURE 10 Elgin, “The Relativity of Fact and the Objectivity of Value” (17)
F 8/8	LECTURE 11 Macintyre, “Relativism, Power, and Philosophy” (26) Quiz 4

WEEK FIVE	
M 8/11	LECTURE 12 Hoy, “One What? Relativism and Poststructuralism” (32) Short Paper 2 Due — 12:00 p.m.
W 8/13	LECTURE 13 Code, “Must a Feminist Be a Relativist After All?” (33)
F 8/15	LECTURE 14 Bilgrami, “Realism and Relativism” (13) Quiz 5

WEEK SIX	
M 8/18	LECTURE 15 Geertz, “Anti Anti-Relativism” (24)
W 8/20	LECTURE 16 MacFarlane, “Making Sense of Relative Truth” (7)
F 8/22	COURSE WRAP-UP Quiz 6
M 8/25	Final Paper Due — 12:00 p.m.