

# PHI 171 — *PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY*

FALL 2014 – LEHMAN COLLEGE, CUNY

*instructor:* **Marcello Di Bello**

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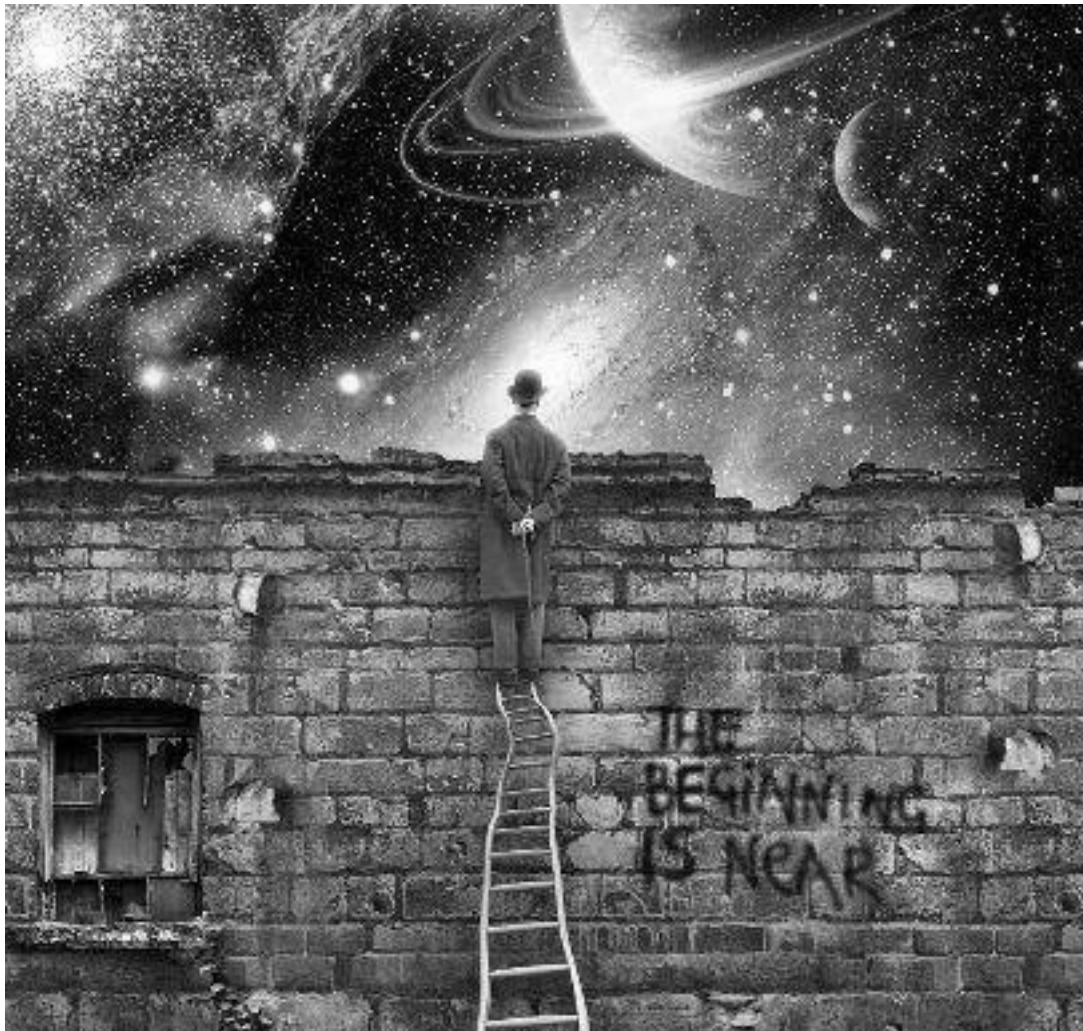
*course webpage:* [www.marcellodibello.com/PHI171](http://www.marcellodibello.com/PHI171)

*times & venue:* Class meets Mon and Wed

The 11:00–12:15 class meets in CA-348

The 12:30–01:45 class meets in CA-349

*office hours:* Mon and Wed, 2–3 PM, CA-365



Topics will include the nature of time; human freedom; the existence of God; faith and reason; knowledge and its limits; the relationship between mind, body and machines; the nature of consciousness; happiness in life and justice in society.

## OBJECTIVES

You will experience the pleasure of asking fundamental questions about ourselves and the world around us. Through reading, writing and philosophical dialogues, you will improve your reasoning skills and develop an awareness of the multiplicity of viewpoints.

## FORMAT AND COURSE MATERIALS

You will attend lecture and partake in a number of philosophical dialogue about the topics of the course. The reading materials are available through the course website. There will be occasional movie screenings for those interested.

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

- (a) Three writing assignments:
  - (#1) summary and analysis [20% of the grade – **DUE Sep. 29**]
  - (#2) paper sketch [20% of the grade – **DUE Nov. 10**]
  - (#3) final paper [20% of the grade – **DUE Dec. 17**]
- (b) Dialogue participation [20% of the grade – **See Dialogue Schedule**]
- (c) In-class multiple choice quiz [20% of the grade – **During Exam Period**]

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## SCHEDULE | READINGS

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### WEEK 1: Why Do We Philosophize?

<b>Mon (09/01): NO CLASS</b> <i>Labor Day</i>	
<b>Wed (09/03):</b> Introduction	<i>Existential Comics</i> – The machine

### WEEK 2: Is Time an Illusion?

<b>Mon (09/08):</b> The mystery of time	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> , Book 11
<b>Wed (09/10):</b> Time in physics	Davies, "That mysterious flow"

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WEEK 3: Does the World Change?

<b>Mon (09/15):</b> Against change	Parmenides, <i>On Nature</i> [excerpts]
<b>Wed (09/17):</b> Zeno's paradoxes	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> , Book 6 [excerpts]

WEEK 4: Is the Future Predetermined?

<b>Mon (09/22):</b> Aristotle's sea battle	Aristotle, <i>On Interpretation</i> [excerpts]
<b>Wed (09/24):</b> No CLASS	

WEEK 5: Are We Free to Choose?

<b>Mon (09/29):</b> Incompatibilism <b>Assignment #1 DUE</b>	van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism"
<b>Wed (10/01):</b> Neuroscience	Libet, "Do We Have Free Will?"

WEEK 6: Can Physics Explain Consciousness?

<b>Mon (10/06):</b> Seeing red	Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"
<b>Wed (10/08):</b> Consciousness	Chalmers, "Consciousness and its Place in nature"

WEEK 7: Can Physics Explain Consciousness?

<b>Mon (10/13):</b> NO CLASS Columbus Day	
<b>Wed (10/15):</b> Consciousness	Chalmers, "Consciousness and its Place in nature"

WEEK 8: Can a Machine Think and Understand?

<b>Wed (10/20):</b> Artificial Intelligence	Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"
<b>Wed (10/22):</b>	Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"

WEEK 9: Can We Prove That God Exists?

<b>Mon (10/27):</b> The ontological argument	Anselm, <i>Proslogion</i> , Chapter 2
<b>Wed (10/29):</b> The cosmological proof	Aquinas, <i>Summa</i> , Ia, q2, a3

WEEK 10: If God Exists, Why is There Suffering?

<b>Mon (11/03):</b> Natural disasters	Voltaire, "Poem on the Lisbon disaster"
<b>Wed (11/05):</b> Human evil	Jonas, "Concept of God after Auschwitz"

WEEK 11: Can We Do Away with Faith?

<b>Mon (11/10):</b> Evidence	Clifford, "Ethics of Belief"
<b>Wed (11/12):</b> Will	James, "The Will to Believe"

WEEK 12: How Do We Justify Our Beliefs?

<b>Mon (11/17):</b> The limits of the senses <b>Assignment #2 DUE</b>	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> , 1 & 2
<b>Wed (11/19):</b> Induction and deduction	Hume, <i>Treatise</i> , Book I, Part III, sec. VI Carroll, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles"

WEEK 13: Can Everything We Believe Be False?

<b>Mon (11/24):</b> Rivers	Wittgenstein, <i>On Certainty</i> [excerpts]
<b>Wed (11/26):</b> Snails	Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"

WEEK 14: Should We Donate Our Money?

<b>Wed (12/01):</b> How do we decide?	Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"
<b>Mon (12/03):</b> Utility	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Week 15: What is a Just Society?

<b>Mon (12/08):</b> Inequalities	no assigned reading
<b>Wed (12/10):</b> The difference principle	Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i> [excerpts]

WEEK 16: What's Next?

<b>Mon (12/15):</b> Review <b>Assignment #3 DUE</b>	No assigned readings
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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, falsifying identity and academic records, will not be tolerated. Students who are found to have committed any act of academic dishonesty will fail the class.

## ACCOMMODATING DISABILITIES

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, phone number, 718-960-8441.

### ACADEMIC CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE (ACE) AND SCIENCE LEARNING CENTER (SLC)

The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and the Science Learning Center (SLC) are two of the tutoring centers on campus. The ACE provides appointment based and drop-in tutoring in the humanities, social sciences, and writing, as well as general writing and academic skills workshops. The SLC provides drop-in tutoring for natural and computer science courses. To obtain more information about the ACE and the SLC, please visit their website at <http://www.lehman.edu/issp>, or please call the ACE at 718-960-8175, and the SLC at 718-960-7707.