



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Self and Non-Self: East and West - 15790

Last update 18-03-2025

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: Philosophy

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Prof, Eviatar Shulman, Prof Aaron Segal

Coordinator Email: eviatar.shulman@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Upon appointment. Each Prof. has his own hours

Teaching Staff:

Prof. Aaron Segal,
Prof. Eviatar Shulman

Course/Module description:

We care a great deal about ourselves. But what are 'selves'? Are they even real at all? And if so, what is their nature? And does it make sense to care in the way we do about them?

In this course we will examine a number of philosophical approaches to these questions, from both Eastern and Western traditions, some of which deny to one degree or another the existence or significance of the self, and others of which defend its robust existence and centrality.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- 1) articulate competing views about the nature and value of the self*
- 2) profitably read philosophers and thinkers from geographically and religiously diverse traditions--even in tandem*
- 3) assess the fruitfulness of analytic and phenomenological approaches to metaphysical topics*

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: The core of class is discussion and joint analysis of the issues at hand. This will be based on readings and on presentations by the professors. There will be a possibility for students presentations, and in such cases they will be part of the final grade. Classes will use both Hebrew and English, while making sure all is clear to everyone.

Course/Module Content:

- 1) Introduction*
- 2) Metaphysics*

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- 2a) *Buddhist Reductionism*
 - 2b) *Nihilism: Arguments for and Against*
 - 2c) *Personalism*
 - 2d) *Minimal Self*
 - 2e) *Are We Fundamental?*
 - 2f) *Absolute Selfhood*

3) *Practical and Moral Reason*

- 3a) *Morality and the Significance of Persons*
- 3b) *Arenas of Presence/Practical Concern*
- 3c) *Abhidharma and the Phenomenology of the Self*
- 3d) *Practical Reason and Selves*

4) *Epistemology*

- 4a) *Mysticism and the Self*

Required Reading:

1. "Questions of King Milinda and Nagasena" (chs 2-3, excerpts)
2. Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, ch. 3
3. Eric Olson, *What are We? A Study in Personal Ontology*, pp. 180-202
4. Amber Carpenter, "Persons Keeping Their Karma Together: The Reasons for the pudgalavāda in Early Buddhism" in Koji Tanaka (ed.) *The Moon Points Back*
5. Matthew Mackenzie, "Enacting the Self: Buddhist and Enactivist Approaches to the Emergence of the Self," in *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*
6. Dan Zahavi, "The Experiential Self: Objections and Clarifications," in *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*
7. Kris McDaniel, *The Fragmentation of Being*, Sections 6.1-6.5
8. Wolfgang Fasching, "'I am of the Nature of Seeing': Phenomenological Reflections on the Indian Notion of Witness-Consciousness," in *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*
9. Kris McDaniel *Fragmentation of Being*, sec. 6.6-6.7
10. Matti Eklund, "Who Cares if We're Not Fully Real?" *Philosophical Studies* 179 (2022) 3141-3150
11. Cian Dorr, John Hawthorne, and Juhani Yli-Vakkuri, *The Bounds of Possibility: Puzzles of Modal Variation*, sec. 13.3
12. Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death*, chs. 2-3 (excerpts)
13. Rupert Gethin, *Buddhist Maps*, ch. 2
14. Eric Olson, *What are We? A Study in Personal Ontology*, pp. 202-210
15. Miri Albahari, *The Mystic and the Metaphysician: Clarifying the Role of Meditation in the Search for Ultimate Reality*, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 26, No. 7-8, 2019, pp. 12-36

Additional Reading Material:

Extra readings will be recommended

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 50 %

Active Participation / Team Assignment 50 %

Additional information: