

# Groups: What They Are and What They Can Do

PHIL 20242 01

11:00–12:15 T/Th, Debartolo 213

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Office Hours: T/Th 12:30–1:30 & W 3:30–4:30

**Course Description:** We are all members of groups. Some of us are members of a sports team, the staff of the Observer, or the band. We are all members of the community of Notre Dame. Groups are commonplace. Yet, they raise a host of interesting philosophical questions: What kind of thing is a group? How are groups formed or dissolved? What sort of actions can groups perform? Are they responsible for their good (or bad) actions the way that individuals are? These questions are essential for our everyday lives. Answering them guides us in how we think about ourselves and our roles in groups. And apart from our personal investment, groups constitute some of the most crucial features of the world – governments, churches, and corporations, to name a few.

We'll have two main goals for this course. First, we'll familiarize ourselves with answers philosophers have given to the above questions. Second, we'll develop the resources necessary to intelligently discuss how these issues relate to our everyday lives. Potential topics here may include: How many members of a band or team can be replaced before the resulting band or team is not longer the same? Are mob bosses responsible for all the crimes members of their mob commit? Can corporations speak and hold moral or political views the same way individuals do?

**Texts:** There is no textbook for this class. We will instead be working from a variety of material, including professional philosophy articles, opinion pieces, podcasts, and video. Each topic will have required material. Most topics will have further material that we encourage students to consume.

## Grade Distribution:

Participation	20%
Audio Reports	20%
First Paper	20%
Second Paper	40%

**Letter Grade Distribution:** Notre Dame does not have an official Numeral-to-letter grade conversion. In this course We will use the following:

>= 93.00	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 66.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	<= 59.99	F

## Course Policies:

- Students should come to class having worked through the required material and be prepared to discuss it.
- Late papers will be deducted one half-letter grade for each day late (A to A-, etc.).
- **Unless the student has an official excuse, there will be no makeups.**

## Honor Code:

Students are responsible for compliance with the University's honor code at all times. Notre Dame has extensive guidelines on the honor code. Additionally, the philosophy department has a document explaining how Notre Dame's honor code applies to writing philosophy papers. Links to both of these can be found on the course website.

We take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating of any kind will be reported, will result in a failing grade on the assignment, and might lead to even stronger penalties. Any particular questions about the honor code should be directed to us.

## Accessibility:

We are committed to making this course accessible to all students. Students who have (or think they may have) a disability, or who have questions about disability, are invited to talk to either of us. Students can also contact the Office of Disability Services for a confidential discussion in the Sara Bea Learning Center for Students with Disabilities, or by phone at 574-631-7157. All information given to Disability Services is confidential and is shared only with your consent. We recommend that students who believe they may need an accommodation for this course contact the Office of Disability Services at their earliest opportunity. This is to ensure there is time to complete the process before accommodations are actually needed. Additional information about Disability Services and the process for requesting accommodations can be found at [disabilityservices.nd.edu](http://disabilityservices.nd.edu).

## Assignments:

**Attendance:** It is impossible for a student to participate if she does not attend class. It is also difficult to learn the material without attending and participating. Students who have more than two unexcused absence will have points deducted from their overall grade.

**Participation:** Philosophy is an activity that we do, and active participation in philosophy is the best way to learn to do philosophy. Accordingly, discussion will be a central part of class, and participation factors heavily into the final overall grade. It's important to note that active participation is more than just being vocal; it requires carefully thinking through issues and engaging with peers, often by listening to, supporting, clarifying, or justifying their comments. Doing philosophy is not solely about contributing your own ideas, but cultivating the ideas of others. To develop these oft-neglected skills, students will form groups to work in throughout the semester. These groups will be the main source of accountability for a student's participation grade.

**Audio Reports:** For each unit, students will collaborate with their groups to produce 10 minutes of philosophical conversation. These conversations will be recorded by the group and graded on the extent to which they demonstrate (i) the group's mastery of the material discussed, (ii) the group's ability to prioritize material, and (iii) the group's skill in active participation. Students will be guided through the first of these audio reports.

**Papers:** Students will write two papers ( $\approx 6$  pages) for this course. The first paper will be on a topic covered in the first half of the semester while the second paper will be on a topic covered in the second half of the semester. One of the papers must be on an applied issue, and the other must be on a foundational issue. Students will choose their own topic in consultation with the professors. We will spend time in class discussing, working on, and presenting these papers. The second is worth double that of the first, collectively accounting for 60% of a student's overall grade. However, the grade assigned to the second paper will be partially determined by the quality of a student's presentation. Papers will be assigned letter grades. Late papers will be deducted one half-letter grade for each day late (A to A-, etc.).

Schedule				
Date	Topic	Required Reading	Recommended Reading	Rapturous Reading
<b>Unit 1 - Existence</b>				
Tuesday, Aug 23	Introductions			
Thursday, Aug 25	Existence of Individuals	Korman, Intro and Chap 1 of Objects	Merricks, Chapter 4 of Objects and Persons	Quine, "On What There Is"
Tuesday, Aug 30	Existence of Individuals Cont'd			
Thursday, Sept 1	Problem of the Many	Lewis, "Many, but almost one"	Unger, "The Problem of the Many"	Rea, "Problem of Material Constitution"
Tuesday, Sept 6	Existence of Groups	Ritchie, "The Metaphysics of Social Groups"	Ritchie, "What Are Groups?"	Effingham, "The Metaphysics of Groups"
Thursday, Sept 8	Social Groups	Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Do?"	Mallon, "Passing, Traveling, and Reality: Social Constructivism and the Metaphysics of Race"	de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (Introductions)
<b>Unit 2 - Persistence</b>				
Tuesday, Sept 13	Persistence	Della Rocca, Wireless Philosophy, "History: Locke on Personal Identity Pts. 2-3"	Olson, "Personal Identity"	Parfit, "Personal Identity"
		Perry, "Dialogue on Personal Identity"		
Thursday, Sept 15	Persistence of Musical Groups	Cray, "Fightin' Words: Sabbath Doesn't Need the Ozzman"	Smithsonian Magazine, "Is a Band Without Its Original Members Still the Same Band?"	Interview with Paul Stanley
Tuesday, Sept 20	Persistence of Sports Groups	Papineau, "Sporting teams, Spacetime worms, and Israeli football"	Wang, Wireless Philosophy, "Metaphysics: The Ship of Theseus"	Mumford, "Allegiance and Identity"
<b>Unit 3 - Agency</b>				
Thursday, Sept 22	Mental Activity	Searle, "Collective Intention and Action"	Gilbert, "Shared Intention and Personal Intention"	Barnett, "You are Simple"
Tuesday, Sept 27	Agency of Groups	Bratman, "Shared Cooperative Activity"	List and Pettit, Chapters 1 and 2 of Group Agency: The Possibility, Design, and Status of Corporate Agents	
Thursday, Sept 29	Corporations	<i>Citizens United</i>	Hess, "If you tickle us...: How Corporations can be moral agents without being persons"	
<b>Unit 4 - Responsibility</b>				
Tuesday, Oct 4	Responsibility	Philosophy Bites Podcast on Moral Luck	Williams and Nagel on Moral Luck	
Thursday, Oct 6	Group Responsibility	Mellema, "Collective Responsibility and Qualifying Actions"	H.D. Lewis, "Collective Responsibility"	
Tuesday, Oct 11	Vicarious Liability and Reparations	Coates, "The Case for Considering Reparations"	Coates, "The Case for Reparations"	
Thursday, Oct 13	Criminal Conspiracy	Ohlin, "Group Think: The Law of Conspiracy and Collective Reason"	Manning, "A Common Law Crime Analysis of Pinkerton", Sec. 1-4	

<b>Mid-term Break</b>				
<b>Unit 5 - Practical Rationality</b>				
Tuesday, Oct 25	Instrumental Rationality	Excerpts from Hume		
Thursday, Oct 27	Group Rationality	The Emperor's New Clothes		
Tuesday, Nov 1	Voting (Formal Problems)	SEP, "Voting Methods"	Brams and Fishburn, "Voting Procedures"	
Thursday, Nov 3	More Voting	Coleman and Ferejohn, "Democracy and Social Choice"	William MacAskill, "Normative Uncertainty as a Voting Problem"	
<b>Unit 6 - Epistemic Rationality</b>				
Tuesday, Nov 8	Peer Disagreement	Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement"		
Thursday, Nov 10	Wisdom of Crowds	List, "Group Knowledge and Group Rationality"	Fallis, "Wikipistemology"	Petit, "When to defer to majority testimony - and when not"
Tuesday, Nov 15	Epistemic Relativism	Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society"	Zellner, "Is Relativism Self-defeating?"	MacFarlane, "Relativism and Disagreement"
Thursday, Nov 17	You Just think that Because	Vavova, "Irrelevant Influences"		
<b>Unit 7 - Philosophy of Religion</b>				
Tuesday, Nov 22	Trinity	Rea, "Polytheism and Christian Belief"	Forrest, "Divine Fission: A New Way of Moderating Social Trinitarianism"	
Thursday, Nov 24- No class, Thanksgiving	No Class			
Tuesday, Nov 29	Original Sin/Atonement	Thurow, "Communal Substitutionary Atonement"	Quinn, "In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All"	
Thursday, Dec 1	Issues in the Catholic Church	Guest Host Paul Blaschko		
<b>End of Semester Stuff</b>				
Tuesday, Dec 6	Paper Presentations Day 1			
Thursday, Dec 8	Paper Presentations Day 2			
<b>Final</b>	Salon	Tuesday, Dec 15, 10:30--12:30		
<b>Second Paper</b>		Wednesday, Dec 16, 11:59pm EST		