

PHIL 130–026 | Philosophy and Persons | Spring 2024

Philosophy of Authenticity

Class times: TTH 1:00–2:15 PM
Classroom: Cuneo 203

Instructor: Italo Alves | ialves@luc.edu
Office: Crown 334H | [Book an appointment](#)

Essential Course Information

Course Description

The question of who we are lies at the heart of philosophical inquiry. From Plato’s contemplation of the imperative “know thyself” etched onto the Temple of Apollo at Delphi to Augustine’s assertion that truth resides within, Western philosophy has been shaped by the dichotomy between “inner” and “outer” realities and the duality between the self as agent (who knows) and as object (who is known). This course delves into the question of whether, in our pursuit of self-knowledge, we should actively aspire to *be* or *become* who we truly are. This is the problem of authenticity, the idea that some elements of ourselves can express who we really are, or that our lives can be led in a way that truly represents our inner nature. In this course, we will explore the challenges of authenticity, delving into questions such as: How can we ascertain that we are truly ourselves? Is it possible to exist as anything other than our authentic selves? Should we strive to become more aligned with our true selves? And, fundamentally, is there such a thing as a “self”? Structured into three sections, our investigation commences by exploring classical accounts of selfhood, dissecting the development of concepts like the soul, consciousness, ego, person, and subject. In the second section, we will examine modern perspectives on the call for authenticity, scrutinizing its Romantic origins and existential implications. In the final section, we will read critical accounts of authenticity that challenge foundational notions of selfhood, personhood, and subjectivity, complexifying the quest for authenticity and putting the very possibility of being authentic into question. The philosophers we will be reading offer complex accounts that involve questions of knowledge, values, and reality.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to describe and distinguish among several theories of selfhood, evaluate diverse perspectives on authenticity, explore different dimensions of leading authentic or inauthentic lives, discern the sources of the demand for authenticity, and articulate different critiques of the concept of authenticity.

Technology and Course Materials

Perusall. Readings will be made available through Perusall, a platform that allows students to read and annotate texts collaboratively. In order to access the readings, create an account on <https://perusall.com> using your name and Loyola email address, select “Enroll in a Course”, and enter the following course code: XXXXXXXXXX

Sakai. The syllabus and many other relevant materials for this course, as well as important communications, will be posted on Sakai. Students are strongly encouraged to check Sakai frequently for any additional materials and to keep up with all course information.

Assignments and Grading

Grade Scale (% = points)

A: 93–100%	B+ 87–89%	C+: 77–79%	D+: 67–69%	F: <59%
A–: 90–92%	B: 83–86%	C: 73–76%	D: 63–66%	
	B–: 80–82%	C–: 70–72%	D–: 60–62%	

Grade Components

Participation	25%
Perusall Annotations	25%
Group Presentation + Handout.....	15%
Exams	15% each (=45%)
TOTAL.....	110%

As you can see, the sum of the grade components amounts to 110% of the grade, or 110 points. This means that there are multiple ways to earn points. For example, if you don't get a satisfactory grade on one assignment, you can make up for it on another assignment and still earn a high final grade.

Participation (25 points max.)

Although attendance is not taken, participation is an important component of this course. You can participate in different ways. The most important of these is engaging in discussions, which requires that you read the assigned texts and come to class ready to talk about your thoughts and questions. Participation points will also be earned by completing in-class quizzes, worksheets, and homework assignments.

Perusall Annotations (25 points max.)

Post at least 3 high-quality annotations for each reading assignment on Perusall. Students who fail to post at least 3 high-quality annotations will not receive points for the assignment. The deadline for each reading assignment can be found in the Course Schedule below.

Group Presentation + Handout (15 points max.)

Divided into groups, students will sign up in advance and come to class prepared to talk about the day's reading for 10 minutes and facilitate discussion. The group should also prepare a handout to accompany the presentation, to be sent to the instructor at least 24h before class to allow the printing of copies for everyone.

Exams (15 points each, 45 points max.)

We will have three exams in this course, one after each section. Each exam will cover the content of its respective module.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

The university prohibits plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, cheating, and facilitation of academic misconduct. Penalties may range from a grade of “F” to expulsion from the university. Read [Loyola’s full statement on Academic Integrity](#).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Bard, Bing Chat) is permitted only for brainstorming and checking grammar and style. Using these tools for other purposes (e.g., writing a draft of an assignment, entire sentences or paragraphs, papers, annotation comments, or any other course assignment) is **not permitted**. You are entirely responsible for all assignments you submit. Unauthorized use of AI will be treated as a violation of Loyola’s Academic Integrity Policy and subject to the same penalties.

Late Submissions

Except for exams, assignment submissions will be accepted up to seven days after the deadline. However, grades will decrease linearly each day, starting from the original grade point and reaching zero after day seven. For example, if an assignment is worth 10 points by the deadline, it will be worth ~8.75 one day later, ~7.5 two days later, etc. Your grade will be calculated accordingly.

Class Conduct

Our classes will be devoted to discussing potentially controversial ideas. This classroom is a safe space for students identifying as LGBTQ+, and insensitive remarks directed at students because of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or appearance will not be tolerated.

Intellectual Property

All lectures, notes, PowerPoints, and other instructional materials in this course are the intellectual property of the instructor. As a result, they may not be distributed or shared in any manner, either on paper or virtually, without the instructor’s permission. Lectures may not be recorded without the instructor’s consent; when consent is given, those recordings may be used for review only and may not be distributed.

Accommodations

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) and must meet with the instructor individually to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that software may be used to audio record class lectures in order to provide equitable access to students with disabilities. If used, recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at (773) 508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Course Schedule*

Introduction

- 1/16 INTRODUCTION
 1/18 ONBOARDING: No reading required. **Introductory Perusall assignment due.**

The Self as Subject and Object

- 1/23 IDEA: Plato, *Republic* (Book VII) **Group presentation sign-up due.**
 1/25 THE SOUL: Plato, *Republic* (Book X)
 1/30 INWARDNESS: Augustine, *Confessions* (Book X)
 2/1 INWARDNESS, PT. II: No additional reading.
 2/6 CONSCIOUSNESS: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Med. I and II)
 2/8 PERSONALITY: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Book 2, Chapter 27)
 2/13 ARTISTRY/SUBJECTIVITY: Vasari, *Lives* (Preface to the third part, extract) Panofsky, *Idea* (Chapter 4)
 2/15 Recap
 2/20 **Exam #1**

Being Oneself, Being Authentic

- 2/22 SPECTACLE: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*
 2/27 SPECTACLE, PT. II: Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert on Theater* (§ VII–VIII)
 2/29 BAD FAITH: Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Part I, Chapter 2)
 3/12 ALIENATION: Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* ('Estranged Labor')
 3/14 UNTRUTHFULNESS: Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1 (Ch. I, Part 3, C)
 3/19 Recap
 3/21 **Exam #2**

Authenticity Challenged

- 3/26 OPACITY: Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* ('For Opacity')
 4/2 POWER: Foucault, *The Subject and Power* and *On the Genealogy of Ethics* (extracts)
 4/4 AUTHORITY: Barthes, *The Death of the Author*
 4/9 EFFECT: Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*
 4/11 MIND (AS A BLUR): Rorty, *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind*
 4/16 IRONY: Sontag, *Notes on 'Camp'*
 4/18 PERFORMATIVITY: Butler, *Gender Trouble* (extracts)
 4/23 IMPRESSION: Goffman, *Stigma* ('Passing')
 4/25 Recap
 TBA **Exam #3**

* Subject to changes. Readings will be made available.

Bibliography*

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<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/rousseau/inequality/index.htm>.
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- Sontag, Susan. 1999. "Notes on 'Camp.'" In *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, edited by Fabio Cleto, 53–65. Edinburgh University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrcp56.8>.

* It is not necessary to buy any books. Readings will be made available.