

Philosophy 440A Course Description

What makes you *you*? Are you the same person over time? What does it mean to be a person? How is being a person related to being a human being?

This course is part of an Honors Symposium on the nature of personhood and humanity. We will explore a number of philosophical questions related to personal identity over time, the social construction of the self, and the relationship between being a member of homo sapiens and being a person.

This course will begin by examining the classic metaphysical questions:

- What makes you the same person over time?
- Is there a persisting self at all?
- If there is no self, what are the implications for how you ought to live your life?
- What is a self supposed to be?

We will continue our exploration of the self by focusing on the role that society plays in the construction of the self.

- Are race and gender essential to one's identity?
- What does it mean to say that the self is "constructed"—constructed from what, and for what purposes?
- If the self is a narrative or story, does that mean that its content is subjective or objective?
- How does society play a role in the construction of the self?
- Is sexual and racial identity something that one can determine oneself, or is it something produced by a network of social relations?
- How is being human related to having a self?
- Can an individual be a person without being a human being?