

# PHI 371: Philosophical Foundations of Probability and Decision Theory — Revised Online Syllabus

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**Website:** Blackboard, [danielhoek.com/teaching](http://danielhoek.com/teaching)

**Office hours:** Wednesday 10-11 EST over Zoom, or by appointment

**Accommodations.** These are very stressful times for everybody, and the Foundations of Probability may not always be your top priority. So I will be even more understanding than usual if, for whatever reason, you have to skip a class, need an extension etc. But as before, please try to *always let me know beforehand*. If you would like to speak to me about personal issues, I'm always available — just shoot me an e-mail and we can talk over Skype or over the phone. Don't worry too much about your grades — they will not be impacted negatively, and given your work so far, I am confident that everyone in this class will do well.

**Zoom Discussion.** Each Tuesday from 1.30pm until 2.45pm EST, we will have a class discussion on Zoom about the week's reading. You should ensure you're in a **quiet room** for these meetings, and ideally you should be using a **headset**.

**Blackboard Discussion Forum.** I set up an online forum on the Blackboard site for the course that will feature discussion threads where you can discuss the material with your classmates and with me. You can post whenever you like, but generally the intention is for most discussion to take place on Mondays, before the Zoom session, and on Tuesdays, after our Zoom session.

**Lecture.** Every Wednesday I will record a short lecture (between 30 and 45 mins) to introduce the material for the week ahead. You should watch this lecture before you do the reading, as part of your preparation for the next class.

**Coursework.** You have a Short Essay assignment due on April 3rd, and then there will be a final term paper due on May 15th (with a proposal due on April 24th). In addition, there will be small weekly comprehension exercises to make sure you're keeping up with the class content. Some weeks, the exercise will be to make a contribution to the discussion about some questions on the discussion boards before the Tuesday meeting. Some weeks, there will be a short PSet-style exercise, to which you should hand in your solutions by noon on Monday.

**Assessment.** The weights of the grades are for the most part unchanged, except that the weekly comprehension exercises replace some of the problem sets:

*Participation (15%).*

*Problem Sets 1 and 2 (25%).*

*Comprehension Exercises (15%).*

*Short Essay Assignment (20%).*

*Final Term Paper (25%).*

**Office Hours.** For additional questions and discussion, there will be a weekly Zoom meeting on Wednesdays at 10am to replace my regular office hours. Feel free to check in even if you don't have questions yourself.

**Pawfessor Rosie.** For those who want it, our dog Rosie MacHoekie will be providing additional academic and moral support through her Instagram [@pawfessorrosie](#), with a regular stream of adorable pictures, bad philosophy puns and silly quiz questions. (Besides Foundations of Probability, the pawfessor is also teaching courses on Ethical Theory and Bioethics at Virginia Tech this semester. She has a pretty heavy teaching load for a hound!)

### Schedule

March 23-29. *Wrap-Up & Reboot*

March 24. *Zoom discussion:* Problem Set 2

March 25. *Lecture:* Ramsey's Representation Theorem

March 27. Send draft of Short Essay Assignment to your partner, and set up a Skype appointment to discuss the drafts on or before March 31st

March 30-April 5. *Ramsey's Representation Theorem*

March 31st. *Zoom discussion:* Frank Ramsey, "Truth and Probability."

April 1st. *Lecture:* Newcomb's Problem.

April 3rd. **Short Essay Assignment due by 8pm EST.**

April 6-12. *Newcomb's Problem*

April 7th. *Zoom discussion:* Arif Ahmed, "Newcomb's Problem"

April 8th. *Lecture:* Probability and Legal Proof

April 13-19. *Probability and Legal Proof*

April 14th. *Zoom discussion:* Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Liability and Individualized Evidence"

*Lecture:* Physical Probability

April 20-26. *Chance and Determinism*

April 21st. *Zoom discussion:* Michael Strevens, "Inferring Probabilities from Symmetries."

*Lecture:* Quantum Mechanics

April 24th. **Final Paper proposals due by 8pm EST.**

April 27-May 3rd. *Chance in Quantum Mechanics*

April 28th. *Zoom discussion:* Albert and Loewer, "Interpreting the Many Worlds Interpretation."

May 15th. **Final Paper Due by 8pm EST.**