Course description. In 1641, Descartes wrote: 'I do not yet have a sufficient understanding of what this "I" is'. What is the 'I', the self, the soul? And why does it matter that we try to answer this question? In this course we will explore some answers to this question, taking Plato and Descartes as our starting points. We will also explore what follows from these answers, and why they matter. Through intensive writing exercises we will cultivate the main virtues of philosophical prose: plain-spokenness and clarity, the ability to argue persuasively, and the ability to raise deep questions.

Texts:  Plato, Complete Works, ed. John Cooper
Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons

The remaining reading assignments will be posted to the Blackboard site.

NB: you are expected to bring a printout of whatever text we are reading to every class.

Requirements and policies:
1) Attendance. You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences. Further unexcused absences will lower your grade for the course at the rate of half a grade point for each missed class.

2) Paper submission. We shall use Turnitin. A few things to keep in mind: papers should have your name and date at the top of the first page, have page numbers, be printed in a readable 12 point font, be double-spaced. Late papers will be graded down at the rate of one grade point per day (the difference between an A and an A- is one grade point).

3) Plagiarism.
   i) Plagiarizing will result in an automatic F for the course.
   ii) Read, absorb, and take the quiz at http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm
       (report the results to me by email: tk283@cornell.edu)
   iii) If you hesitate whether something constitutes plagiarism, consult me. Avoiding plagiarism is your responsibility: 'I did not know that was plagiarism' is not an excuse.
   iv) In completing your assignments, you may not use any sources other than the ones assigned or suggested.

4) Graded work.
i) Class participation. Your engagement and contributions will contribute 15% to the final grade.

ii) Short writing assignments. We shall have numerous opportunities to do short writing assignments, both in-class and take-home. Take-home assignments will be due by email at 12am of the day of the class (i.e. the night before). Assignments for the next class will be posted on the Blackboard site. It is your responsibility to check the Blackboard site. All of these will be pass/fail. No late short assignments will be accepted. Combined, these will count for 10% of the grade.

iii) 6 papers + 4 re-writes (these will start short, and get longer toward the end of the semester, weighed 5%-10%-10%-10%-10%-30%). 75%.

5) Conferences. Each student will schedule two conferences with the instructor, to discuss progress and written work. (this is not optional).

6) Public domain. All written work produced for this class will be in the public domain: you should expect that, on occasion, other students in the class will read and comment on your work.

7) The instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

8) In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances, so that arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.
Week 1
01/22  Introduction
01/24  Early Greek conceptions of the soul

Week 2
01/29  Plato, Phaedo
02/03  Plato, Phaedo
        Paper 1 due
02/21  Plato, Phaedo
        Paper 1 due

Week 3
02/05  Plato, Republic I
02/07  Plato, Republic II

Week 4
02/12  Plato, Republic III
        Draft of Paper 2 due
02/14  Plato, Republic IV-V

Week 5
02/19  Plato, Republic VI-VII
        Paper 2 due
02/21  Plato, Republic VIII-IX

Week 6
02/26  Descartes, Meditations I-II
        Draft of Paper 3 due
02/28  Descartes, Meditations I-II, Chalmers, The Matrix as metaphysics

Week 7
03/05  Peer Review Session
03/07  Descartes, Meditations I-II, Ryle, Descartes' Myth
        Paper 3 due

Week 8
03/12  Locke, Selections
03/14  Hume, Selections

SPRING BREAK

Week 9
03/26  Anscombe, The first person
        Draft of Paper 4 due
03/28  Perry, On Knowing one's self
Week 10
04/02  Parfit, Reasons and Persons
  Paper 4 due
04/04  Parfit, Reasons and Persons

Week 11
04/09  Parfit, Reasons and Persons
04/11  Parfit, Reasons and Persons

Week 12
04/16  Parfit, Reasons and Persons
  Draft of paper 5 due
04/18  Parfit, Reasons and Persons

Week 13
04/23  Olson, There is no problem of the self
  Paper 5 due
04/25  Merricks, There are no criteria of identity over time

Week 14
04/30  McIntyre, After Virtue, selections
05/02  McIntyre, After Virtue, selections

Final Paper Due Date: TBASchedule

some other interesting papers:
Olson: Animalism and the corpse problem
Thomson: People and their bodies
Velleman: Self as Narrator
Williams: The self and the future, Williams ‘Are Persons Bodies?’
Kripke, against Identity theory