



Phil 101

Introduction to Philosophy

Lectures

Mondays & Wednesday 10:00 - 13:00,
online on Canvas Collaborate Ultra

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Office hours. By appointment.

About this course. As a discipline, philosophy has very broad aims. Philosophers are prone to ask such general questions as *what is the world like? How do we gain knowledge? How should we live our lives?* But despite the generality and abstract nature of these questions, it is possible to approach them with standards for clarity and precision. Philosophy, in an academic setting, strives to gain clarity of thought in dealing with these questions.

It is my belief that an introductory philosophy course should be centred around four aims: developing the skills involved in argument analysis, sharpening one's ability to write critical response papers, and introducing students to the philosophical topics that will be both interesting to non-majors and useful for future majors. I have tried to design the course with these aims in mind.

Phil 101 is an introduction to metaphysics and epistemology (for an introduction to ethics, see Phil 102). What are these subjects? Roughly speaking, metaphysics is the study of reality (i.e. what exists, and what it is like). In this course, we investigate such questions as:

- Is there a god?
- What is the nature of a person (are we biological organisms or immaterial souls)?
- Do we have free will?
- What is the nature of perception?

Epistemology, on the other hand, is concerned with our *knowledge* of things. The epistemological questions that we will consider include:

- Can we know anything about the external world?
- Can we know anything about the future?
- Are we justified to trust the testimony of others?

- What is the nature of justified belief?

Text. The readings for this course include a mix of classic philosophical texts and contemporary papers. There is no textbook for this course. PDFs of these readings will be made available on canvas.

Course Requirements.

- (1) The four-stage writing assignment. (See the description below) - 50%
- (2) 10 in-class participatory exercises - 10%
- (3) Final exam - 40%

The four-stage writing assignment. One of the primary aims of this course is to develop the skills for writing philosophical essays. We will be breaking down the writing process into four stages, each of which has its own separate deadline and will receive its own grade.

Stage 1 - Reconstruct an argument; identify the premises and conclusion (<150 words) - 5%

Stage 2 - Write an exposition (~400 words) - 5%

Stage 3 - Write an exposition *and* response (<1000 words) - 10%

Stage 4 - Full-length essay (~1500 words) - 30%

(The percentages listed are for your overall grade.) The point of this assignment is to build an essay incrementally. You may write on any of the topics that we cover in this course. *You are permitted to write on the same topic for all four stages. You are also permitted to change your topic from one stage to the next.* The choice is yours as to whether you would like to continue building your essay on the same topic.

The advantage of sticking with the same topic from one stage to the next is that you get to re-use previously written material and incorporate feedback from the instructor. On the other hand, if you find a new topic more interesting, or would prefer to start again from scratch, then you're also welcome to do so.

(One caveat. If we reconstruct an argument during a lecture, then I would prefer that you don't hand it in for stage 1. So one reason to switch topics from stage 1 to stage 2 is so that you may write on an argument that we have reconstructed in class for stage 2 and beyond.)

In-class participatory exercises. Each class (except for the first) I will ask for a very short piece of writing concerning the readings. The main purpose of this is to facilitate class participation. When I calculate your final grade, I will drop your two lowest grades (including if you are absent from the class).

Final Exam. There will be a take-home exam after the last lecture (Date TBD—between June 22 and 26). It will consist of several short answer questions requiring you to explain some of the key concepts from the course.

Course Outline

Day	Topic	Sub-topics & key concepts	Readings
1. May 11	Introduction to philosophy & critical reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Metaphysics & Epistemology - Arguments - Propositions - Deduction & Induction - Soundness & Validity 	None
2. May 13	Theistic Arguments 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classical Theism - A priori & A posteriori - The ontological argument - The cosmological argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excerpts from St. Anselm's "Proslogion" - William Rowe, "An examination of the cosmological argument."
May 18	<i>No class. Victoria Day.</i>		
3. May 20	Theistic Arguments 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The logical problem of evil - Theodicy - Defence - The arguments from particular evils - The global evidential argument from evil - The free will defence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - J.L. Mackie's "Evil and Omnipotence." - Excerpts from Peter van Inwagen, "The Problem of Evil"
4. May 25	Personal Identity Due Date - stage 1 of the writing assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immortality & the soul - The consciousness-swapping argument - The Lockean view - Materialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - John Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality" (Nights 1 & 2) - (Optional) Marya

			Schechtman, "Personal Identity and the Past" - (Optional) Joshua Olsen, "An Argument for Animalism"
5. May 27	Free Will	- Hard determinism - Libertarian free will - Compatibilism - The consequence argument	- Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings"
6. June 1	Descartes and the method of doubt Due Date - Stage 2 of the writing assignment	- Regress Skepticism - Agrippa's trilemma - Foundationalism - Dream skepticism - The method of doubt - The Cartesian proof of the external world	- Rene Descartes, <i>Meditations I - III</i>
7. June 3	Skepticism and Moore	- Brain in a Vat skepticism - Skepticism about the past - Moore's proof of the external world. - Moore-shift - What does it mean to beg the question?	- Jennifer Nagel, "Skepticism" from <i>Knowledge: A very short introduction</i> , (page 12-24; page 24-30 are optional). - Excerpt from G.E. Moore, "Proof of the External World"
8. June 8	Perception, Appearance, and Reality Due Date - Stage 3 of the writing assignment	- Direct realism - Sense data - Indirect realism - Inference to the best explanation - The argument from illusion - The argument from hallucination	- David Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> XII.1 118-119. - Bertrand Russell, "Appearance and Reality" from <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i>
9. June 10	The problem of induction	- Hume's problem of induction	- Bertrand Russell "On induction" from <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> - (Optional) David Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , IV.

10. June 15	Testimony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skepticism about testimony - Reductionism - Non-reductionism - Credibility deficits - Testimonial Injustice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jennifer Nagel, "Testimony" from <i>Knowledge: A very short introduction</i>. - Miranda Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice" - (Optional) Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice", Philosophy Bites Podcast
11. June 17	<p>TBD</p> <p>I would like to keep this week open in case the material from the previous weeks takes longer than planned. If we stay on course with our planned schedule, then we will decide on an additional topic.</p>		
June 19	Due Date - Stage 4 of the writing assignment		

Attendance. There is no grade for attendance. However, there is a grade for the in-class participatory assignments. To accommodate the occasions where students have to miss class, I will only incorporate eight of the ten possible assignments into your final grade.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism or any other form of cheating is a serious offence. The penalty for plagiarism is a failing grade of 0% on the assignment and any such misconduct may be reported to the Dean of Arts. See this link for a guide as to what constitutes plagiarism:
<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

Student Support. [Source - UBC calendar] UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides

appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available [here \(https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success \)](https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success)