

PHIL 375: Philosophy and Literature

Summer 2022, Term 1 (Sect. 001)

Meets: T 16:00-19:00 and R 16:00-19:00 at BUCH A203

Instructor:

Stefan Lukits
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Teaching Assistants:

TA: TBA
TBA

Office Hours:

- Stefan: by appointment
- TBA: by appointment

We will be using Piazza discussion about course logistics. Piazza is an alternative to emailing questions to the instructor, the TA, or your classmates with the added advantage that everyone can follow the discussion. Find our class signup link [here](#). Use the access code TBA. It is imperative that students read UBC-generated emails by the instructor sent to all students, as they may contain important announcements.

Description

PHIL 375 "Philosophy and Literature" addresses philosophical issues in works of literature or arising from theories of literary interpretation. Topics include issues relating to relativism, the nature of morality, free will, personal identity, the nature of the emotions. This course in particular will be about the question what the interpretation of texts and the methods associated with interpretation (hermeneutics) can teach us about more general philosophical questions such as metaphysics, scientific method, moral responsibility, and personal identity.

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Outline a complex argument in an assigned text, stating premises and conclusion.
2. Assess the strength of arguments in assigned texts.
3. Complete an essay that discusses and evaluates arguments with a clear structure and well-supported arguments.
4. Discuss and defend one's own view around issues of introductory ethics.

Course Website

We have a site on the UBC course website system called "Canvas." We will use the Canvas site for several purposes, but grades will be in an instructor spreadsheet, not on the UBC Canvas site. I will provide access to the instructor spreadsheet using a special set of login credentials. To access the Canvas site, go to this site and log in with your Campus Wide Login and password: <http://canvas.ubc.ca>

Evaluation/Assignments

25% Reading Assessments

There is a fair bit of reading to do for this course. There will be reading assessments during class time to ensure that students read these texts carefully. Attendance is also a part of this grade component. I will record attendance and conduct the reading assessments on an academic platform called acadly (the registration code of this course for acadly is TBA; however, do not sign up on acadly before carefully reviewing the instructions on Piazza). The 25% break down as follows: 5% attendance; 20% reading assessment quizzes. Do not check in on acadly if you do not attend in person.

50% Essays

Essay #1

The first essay assignment (Essay #1) is an assignment that you submit on Canvas before Thursday, May 26, 2022, at 3pm. It is freestyle, which means that you have a fair amount of artistic licence. One conventional choice for students is to write personal literary non-fiction. There is no limit on what you can do EXCEPT write an academic or argumentative paper. You do not need (and in fact are discouraged) to refer to philosophy or the material that we have covered in class.

The idea is to write a literary text based on the idea that your life and the narrative associated with it provides a "text" for interpretation. If you put recognizable effort into this project, you will receive 85%–100%. Some questions to pursue are whether there are overall meanings or intentions in your life; what the role of contingency and randomness is; whether there is some kind of narrative with a beginning, an ending, and a middle that holds your life together; and what the continuity of personal identity is throughout the history or story of your life. Note that I do not want you to answer these questions in a detached and academic manner (you will do some of this in Essay #2), and you definitely don't have to cover all of them (you may not even want to cover any of them explicitly). I want Essay #1 to be personal and non-academic, perhaps like a journal entry or a letter written to a close friend. You are also encouraged to drill down immediately into something that is pointedly particular about you—do not waste time with generalities. The more detailed and specific this paper is about you, the better, and you get to choose YOUR preferred way of expressing yourself about what matters to you.

Don't worry about your grade or a grading rubric for Essay #1. If you put recognizable effort into this project, you will receive 85%–100%. The first paper is freestyle in the extreme and meant to be personal -- about YOU, meaning that there are really no limits as to what you can do -- EXCEPT write an academic or argumentative paper. I want it to be more like a journal entry or a letter to a personal friend. You do not need to address the questions suggested in the previous paragraph, they are only meant to help you think about this project. You will submit the paper anonymously with no name or student number on the paper, only your six digit code. I will download all papers as a single zip file without identifying information. The idea is to connect "story" with your life—is there some coherence in your life ... what is the underlying meaning of the events in your life ... keep it personal and talk about your life, not life in the abstract. The essay must be exactly two letter-sized pdf pages (no title page!), but the formatting can be anything you like.

Essay #2

The second essay assignment (Essay #2) is an assignment that you submit on Canvas before Friday, June 24, 2022, at 11:59pm. Essay #2 is very different from Essay #1. It is an academic paper in which you address a philosophical question based on the readings. Your audience is an intelligent undergraduate student who has attended our course and done our readings. The essay will be marked on content (clarity of presentation, strength of argument, relevance of thesis) and form (spelling, grammar, presentation in print).

Essay #2 needs to be argumentative, not expository or interpretive. You need an informative thesis, one that is strong enough so someone can reasonably disagree with it. Then you defend your thesis against the best objections of your reasonable opponents, much like a lawyer would: professionally and without flourish. You pick your own topic; it must fulfill the following constraints: (1) it is based on one of the class readings; (2) it relevantly touches on a theme or an issue that we have talked about in the lectures. I will put some material in the Modules section of Canvas to help you get started.

This paper will be six pages in length, where "six pages" means that the length of the paper must be at least six pages and at most seven pages. Use 1.5 line spacing and a font between 11pt and 12pt. Put your name and UBC student number on top of the paper. No title page. Submit in pdf format. (25%)

25% Final Exam

The final exam will be held during the exam period for Term 1, which is June 26–30, 2022. Date and location are set by UBC. The exam will consist of two parts: an essay question and a multiple choice / short answer section. To prepare for it, attend the lectures, do all the readings required for the class, and take some notes that you can review before the final exam. No extensive studying before the exam should be necessary. If you have attended class, read the material, and reminded yourself of the main ideas of the readings and their authors, you should comfortably pass this requirement.

Course Policies

Class Etiquette and Rules

I don't encourage the use of computers during class time, although you may do so if you are taking notes. Use the computer as you would on an airplane, i.e. off-line. Often it's best to raise your hand if you want to speak, but I'm also happy to have free-form discussions in class where people don't raise their hands as long as everyone is respectful of others (avoid cutting others off, interrupting them when they're in the middle of saying something).

The last paragraph serves as a reminder that this course was originally designed to be delivered in person. Due to the current pandemic, however, this course will be held online.

Basic rules of respectful dialogue will be enforced. Disrespectful speech such as name-calling, stereotyping, and derogatory remarks about ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and sexual/gender identity should be avoided and may constitute harassing speech.

Harassing speech will not be tolerated. The UBC Equity office defines harassment as follows: "Harassment, a form of discrimination, is a comment, conduct or behaviour that humiliates, intimidates, excludes and isolates an individual or group based on the BC Human Rights Code's thirteen grounds of prohibited discrimination." The thirteen grounds of prohibited discrimination are: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical and mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex (including gender and pregnancy), sexual orientation, unrelated criminal conviction. Examples of harassment include "repeated derogatory comments or jokes based on one of the prohibited grounds," and "discussing the culture of other classmates, co-workers, or colleagues in a disrespectful or ridiculing manner."

General information on assignments: Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and should also retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standing. A final examination becomes the property of the University and must remain in the possession of the University for one year from the date of the examination, after which it should be destroyed or otherwise disposed of in accordance with UBC policy.

Policies on Late or Missed Assessments

All essays are due on the day noted on this syllabus and on the assignment instructions. Late essays are subject to a 5% per 24 hours reduction in points. The first late day carries an extra penalty of 5%. This means that if you submit ten minutes late, the penalty is already 10% (5% for lateness, 5% for the first 24 hours). Arts Students must contact Arts Advising as soon as you are aware you may need an in-term concession. Please review their website for concession criteria as well as process to follow. Students in other faculties should contact their faculty advising office for direction. As instructors are no longer able to assess documentation other than the Student Self-Declaration Form, I will not be handling any in-term or final exam concessions. Go [here](#) instead.

Grading Standards

The following provide general guidelines that apply to all courses in the Faculty of Arts, including this one.

The following guidelines offer a broad-brush characterization of the type of work that might be associated with various ranges of grades. The intent here is to encourage general consistency across the Faculty of Arts rather than to provide precise specifications.

- 80% to 100% (A- to A+) Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
- 68% to 79% (B- to B+) Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- 50% to 67% (D to C+) Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
- 0% to 49% (F) Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

University Policies

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 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 on the [UBC Senate](#) website.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

		Mandatory	Optional
Week 1	<i>Introduction</i>		
	May 17	RSA	RSB
	May 19	EKS,KVH	RKY,JAS
Week 2	<i>Narrative and Personal Identity</i>		
	May 24	MSN,GSA	GSB
	May 26	JPS,CTA	HUM,PAR

Week 3	<i>Hermeneutic Tradition Versus Scientific Tradition I</i>		
DUE: Essay 1	May 31	EAG,HOL	WID,HEI
	June 2	DBA,DOS	NTZ,JSM,DBB
Week 4	<i>Hermeneutic Tradition Versus Scientific Tradition II</i>		
	June 7	CTH,POP	HGG,JHC,JHH
	June 9	MAD	CAR
Week 5	<i>Post-Structuralism</i>		
	June 14	MFB,BAR	CTC,MFA,MFC
	June 16	BUT,VGL	MFD,VGL,DRD
Week 6	<i>Skepticism</i>		
	June 21	OMA,OMB	KOL,OCC

Readings

Acronym	Author	Title	Pages
AWP	Martin Heidegger	The Age of the World Picture	57--85
BAR	Roland Barthes	The Death of the Author	2--6
BUT	Judith Butler	Identity, Sex, and the Metaphysics of Substance	22--34
CAR	Rudolf Carnap	The Logic of Science is Syntax	331--333
CTA	Charles Taylor	What Is Human Agency?	15--44
CTC	Charles Taylor	Foucault on Freedom and Truth	69--102
CTH	Chris Thornhill	Two Rival Critiques of Metaphysics	331--365
DOS	Fyodor Dostoyevsky	Underground	1--54
DRD	Jacques Derrida	The Theory of Writing	293--344
EAG	Terry Eagleton	The Rise of English and PHRT	22--30,54--73
EKS	Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick	Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading	1--37
GSA	Galen Strawson	Against Narrativity	428--450
GSB	Galen Strawson	Why I Have No Future	21--26
HEI	Martin Heidegger	Being and Time	Sections 60 62 72 74
HGG	Hans-Georg Gadamer	Elements of a Theory of Hermeneutic Experience	265--285, 291-- 300
HOD	Charles Hodge	On Method	20--31
HOL	Robert Holub	On Ideology and Interpretation	32--50
HUM	David Hume	Of Personal Identity	164--178
JAS	Karl Jaspers	The Tension Between Technical Mass-Order and Human Life	44--69
JHC	Jürgen Habermas	The Conflict of Beliefs	30--45
JHH	Jürgen Habermas	The Hermeneutic Approach	143--170

JPS	Jean-Paul Sartre	Existentialism Is a Humanism	17--72
JSM	John Stuart Mill	On the Logic of the Moral Sciences	chapters III and XII
KOL	Leszek Kolakowski	Fabula Mundi and Cleopatra's Nose	242--248
KVH	Kevin Vanhoozer	Faith Seeking Textual Understanding	16--35
LYO	Jean-François Lyotard	The Postmodern Condition	chapters 10--12
MAD	Penelope Maddy	Carnap's Rational Reconstruction	65--82
MFA	Michel Foucault	Nietzsche, Genealogy, History	139--164
MFB	Michel Foucault	The Incitement to Discourse	17--35
MFC	Michel Foucault	Nietzsche, Freud, Marx	59--68
MFD	Michel Foucault	The Body of the Condemned	3--31
MSN	Marya Schechtman	The Narrative Self-Constitution View	93--135
NTZ	Friedrich Nietzsche	Interpretation	43--58
OCC	Karl Popper	Of Clouds and Clocks	TBA
OMA	Odo Marquard	In Defense of the Accidental	109--129
OMB	Odo Marquard	In Praise of Polytheism	87--110
PAR	Derek Parfit	Why Our Identity Is Not What Matters	266--282
POP	Karl Popper	The Logic of Scientific Discovery	3--26, 276--281
RKY	Richard Kearney	Narrative and Ethics	29--45
RSA	Rebecca Solnit	Apricots I	1--16
RSB	Rebecca Solnit	Apricots II	237--254
VGL	Candace Vogler	Sex and Talk	328--365
WID	Wilhelm Dilthey	The Rise of Hermeneutics	101--114

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Acknowledgment: UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.