

PHIL 375: Philosophy and Literature
Winter Term 1
September 2022

DRAFT SYLLABUS
subject to change

OVERVIEW

In this course, we will explore literature as a mode of philosophizing: that is to say, *a way of doing philosophy*. In many traditions of thought, novels, poetry, plays, comics, and other literary forms are used to explore and communicate philosophical theories and problems, to spark ideas and conversations, and to inspire change, both individual and social. In the first half of the semester, we will study and discuss a range of examples of philosophical literature, analysing their various techniques, strategies, strengths, and weaknesses. In the second half, students will create and workshop their own philosophical writing. Each student may choose their own preferred genre to write in.

Instructor:

Carrie Jenkins, carrie.jenkins@ubc.ca, she/her

Teaching Assistants:

TBA

Office hours: TBA

If you can't make these times, contact [Carrie](#) for an appointment.

Canvas: Canvas will be used for submission and grading of assessed work. The course Canvas link will be provided here when available.

Seminars: We will meet in person Tuesday and Thursday, 11am-12:30pm, MCLD 2002

Texts: There is no textbook for this course. All of the required texts are available online in one form or another. Wherever possible, I have provided links in this syllabus. (UBC library login may be required.) In some cases, a subscription or e-book purchase may be needed. If you have any difficulty accessing any of the course texts, please let me know in advance.

ASSESSMENT

- Participation
 - Worth: 10%

- Participate regularly and thoughtfully in class discussions and activities to earn this part of your grade.
- Essay, providing critical analysis of philosophical literature studied in PART ONE of the course
 - 50% or 25% each
 - Due: **TBA**
 - Length: **1500-2000 words** total (two essays of 750-1000 words each, or one essay of 1500-2000 words)
- First draft of philosophical writing: 20%
 - Due: **TBA**
- Final piece of philosophical writing, revised taking into account feedback from instructor and peers: 20%
 - Due: **TBA**
 - The final piece of philosophical writing should be around **1500-2000 words** in length. First drafts may be a little shorter or a little longer.
 - Typical submissions might be: (a) a short story, (b) a few scenes from a play, (c) a screenplay for an episode of a TV show, or (d) a synopsis for a novel together with a sample chapter or part of a chapter.
 - If you wish, you may include a short explanatory statement (up to 300 words) about your piece. This is advisable if there are elements of context that may not be evident to readers, but which are important for understanding the work.
 - For less wordy forms, such as poetry or comics, alternative length guidelines should be agreed with the instructor prior to submission.

COURSE POLICIES

Instructor email: Please put "PHIL 375" in the subject line. I aim to reply to student emails within two working days (not including weekends and holidays) of receipt. Please note that email sent after working hours (i.e. after 5pm or before 9am PST) aren't received until the next working day.

Grading rubric:

1. Essays: Each essay should discuss one or more of the set texts covered in this course. Key factors for assessment will be: (a) depth of understanding of the text(s) discussed, (b) clarity and focus, (c) essay structure, and (d) quality of philosophical engagement with the text(s).

2. Creative writing: Specifics will depend on genre (poetry is a different creature from fiction, for example), but in all cases the main factors for assessment will be: (a)

creativity and compellingness of the writing, (b) quality of philosophical content, and (c) success in using the chosen form to convey the philosophical ideas.

If you can't do the work on time: I get it. I am happy grant extensions where needed; just ask. However, work submitted late without an extension cannot be accepted, unless exceptional circumstances made it impossible to request an extension in advance of the deadline. This policy is in place to ensure that the course TAs are able to manage their grading workload.

Note on Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below:

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

Mandatory Syllabus Statement about UBC's Values and 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 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](#).

Note on atmosphere: Some of the topics of this course may comprise sensitive material for many people. While we may be examining and questioning beliefs, including some deeply-held ones, everyone in the course—instructor, TAs, and students—has a shared responsibility to ensure that we do so with care and respect, ensuring that our environment is supportive and conducive to learning. No offensive jokes or comments, or other harmful behaviors with respect to race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or anything else, will be acceptable. The aim of our online discussions is not to “win” arguments or to prove how smart we are, but to learn collaboratively with others.

TERM SCHEDULE

This may be re-arranged somewhat as the term proceeds, in order to be responsive to student interests and workloads.

Reading ahead is a good idea, but you should at least be sure to read each week's text(s) before the week begins.

PART ONE: ANALYSIS/CRITIQUE

8 th Sept	Iris Murdoch's interview with Brian Magee for <i>Men of Ideas</i> (1978 BBC TV)
13 th and 15 th Sept	Aesop: " The Hare and the Tortoise " Encyclopedia Britannica: " Achilles Paradox " Lewis Carol: " What the Tortoise Said to Achilles "
20 th and 22 nd Sept	Plato: Book X of <i>Republic</i> I recommend this translation by Desmond Lee , but if you have another translation that is fine. Many older translations are available online for free, including this one by Benjamin Jowett . Lucretius: lines 418-482 of <i>De Rerum Natura</i>, translated by William Ellery Leonard Alternative prose translation by W.H.D Rouse
27 th and 29 th Sept	<i>Star Trek: The Next Generation</i> , season 2, episode 9, "The Measure of a Man" This is easy to access if you have a subscription to a streaming service such as Netflix, Crave, or Amazon Prime. If you anticipate any difficulty getting hold of it, let me know in advance! Gregory Currie: " Does Fiction Make Us Less Empathic? "
4 th and 6 th Oct	Jean-Paul Sartre: Nausea
11 th and 13 th Oct	Iris Murdoch: <i>The Philosopher's Pupil</i> Widely available in hard copy (including second-hand), or as an inexpensive Kindle e-book (currently CA\$10.99 from Amazon.ca).
18 th and 20 th Oct	Jorge Luis Borges: "The Other" (will be made available on the course Canvas page) Graham Priest: " Sylvan's Box: A Short Story and Ten Morals "

PART TWO: WRITING

1 st and 3 rd Nov	Writing 1: Beyond the cliché Prompts and practice Essay(s) due 3rd Nov
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8 th Nov (MIDTERM BREAK 10th Nov)	Writing 2: What can writing do? Prompts and practice
15 th and 17 th Nov	Writing 3: Who are you writing for? Prompts and practice First draft due 17th Nov
22 nd and 24 th Nov	Peer feedback: workshopping drafts in small groups
29 th Nov and 1 st Dec	Writing 4: Revising and editing a draft Advice and exercises
6 th Dec	Final piece due