

PHIL101 Winter Term 1
MWF Hybrid Course with Friday Discussion Sessions
Professor Eric Margolis

*Philosophy challenges us with questions that are directed to our most basic intellectual assumptions and forces us to think hard about ourselves and our position in the world. With its focus on arguments, philosophy also brings clarity and rigour to matters that may otherwise seem inherently obscure and perplexing. Different instructors teach PHIL 101 in different ways. The approach I take doesn't emphasize historical analysis and won't touch on the many philosophical systems that are associated with the great philosophers of the past. Instead, the course will focus on a small number of philosophical problems and some important ways of thinking about them. Your job is to adopt a critical stance to the readings and to the lectures, and to develop your own views based on the arguments we work through. **Topics include: Does God exist? Are people purely material beings? Do we have free will?***

Course Objectives

This course has four major objectives: (1) to help you begin to think philosophically, (2) to improve your critical thinking skills, (3) to develop your oral presentation and communication skills, and (4) to provide you with a general introduction to philosophy by exposing you to a number of important philosophical arguments and theories.

Hybrid / Lecture & Discussion Format

Although this is officially a MWF course, there won't be any synchronous classes on Monday on a typical week. Use that "free day" to watch the prerecorded videos and to do other course prep. Then Wednesday's class will be an in person lecture with me (professor Margolis) and Friday will be a discussion session with your TA. When you sign up for the course, make sure you also sign up for one of the designated Friday discussion sessions.

Grading Scheme (tentative)

- 5% greeting video
- 15% video exercise #1
- 20% video exercise #2
- 25% video exercise #3
- 35% video final project (= final exam)

Attendance and Participation

This is a hybrid course, not an asynchronous course. If you don't plan on attending the in person classes or are systematically unable to do so, you shouldn't take this course. In addition, you are strongly encouraged to fully participate in the class discussion. To learn philosophy, you have "do philosophy"—and that means getting involved in the discussion.

Video Assignments Instead of Papers

All assignments will take the form of video exercises which you will upload to Canvas. These will be short videos (5-10 minutes long) in which you explain and/or critically discuss various philosophical arguments and views. These are meant to deepen your understanding of a philosophical issue and to help you work on your oral presentation and communication skills. These will be marked for

clarity, accuracy regarding the relevant philosophical material, depth of understanding, and originality.

No Traditional Final exam. There will be no traditional in person exam for this course. Instead, the exam will be project-based in which you create a further video at home and submit this via Canvas.

12 Hour Amnesty for Late Work. Assignments are usually due at 11:59pm (i.e., just before midnight). However, if you need more time, you may have an automatic 12 hour extension—you do not need to contact me to receive this extension.

AI Assistance. You may use AI tools in limited ways in this course; details will be explained on Canvas and in class.

This document contains a general overview of the course; it isn't a complete syllabus. For FAQ's, see my website: <https://www.margolisphilosophy.com/101-faq.html>

For students who are enrolled in the course, detailed course information (dates, reading list, assignments, etc.) can be found on Canvas once classes begin.
