

PHIL 1100: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Autumn 2022
The Ohio State University

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Office Hours	W 2:30-3:30 or by appt.
Class Time	WF 12:45-2:05
Class Location	McPherson Lab 1041

Description Welcome! I'm very excited to do philosophy with you all. Philosophy is, fundamentally, a conversation about some of the deepest mysteries of the universe and of the human condition. Hopefully, this sounds exciting. Whether you are completely new to philosophy or have some experience, I hope we can all engage in this 3000-year-old conversation together and make some philosophical progress.

We will do this by first developing our philosophical and logical toolkit. Then we will examine issues of knowledge, skepticism, and the nature of the human mind before turning to issues concerning God and the source of morality. We will end the course by discussing the nature of the good life, political obligation, and philosophies of race and gender.

There are many ways to organize an Introduction to Philosophy course: by location (for example, Asian vs. European philosophy), historically (starting with the beginning of philosophy and proceeding from there), or topically (getting a whirlwind tour of several of the many topics in philosophy). We will be doing the latter, though along the way we will also be reading historically-important classic works of philosophy and elements of both Euro-American and Asian philosophies.

Besides familiarizing students with classic topics and works from the philosophical tradition, there are three other primary goals for this course. First: to increase the critical thinking and analytic writing skills of the students. We will accomplish this via scaffolded writing assignments that ask the students to summarize philosophical arguments and positions and to critically evaluate them. Second: help the student to grow as a reflective philosopher. This goal will be assessed by two reflection exercises on the student's personal philosophical beliefs - one done at the beginning of the semester, the other at the end. Third: to help the student see that philosophy is more than just a set of central questions investigated by a small subset of authors of the Western canon. We will accomplish this goal through a research project undertaken by the student, where the student will investigate a philosopher, philosophical issue, or movement that our required course content is not examining. This should be a fun project where the student sees how diverse, and widely applicable philosophy is. All these goals taken together, by end of course, should leave students as better philosophers, thinkers, and writers who see philosophy as applying to many of the central parts of their lives.

General Education Information This course partially fulfills your legacy GE requirements by being part of the *Cultures and Ideas* category of the old General Education curriculum. The

goals of *Cultures and Ideas* GE courses are the following: Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
- Evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

How this course attains these goals and outcomes: In this course, you will develop your capacities to critically analyze, interpret and evaluate prominent historical and contemporary philosophical arguments and theories.

This course also partially satisfies your new GE requirements by being part of the *Cultural Studies* category of the new General Education curriculum. The goals of *Cultural Studies* GE courses are the following: Successful students will evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas to develop capacities for aesthetic and cultural response, judgment, interpretation, and evaluation.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze and interpret selected major forms of human thought, culture, ideas, or expression.
- Describe and analyze selected cultural phenomena and ideas across time using a diverse range of primary and secondary sources and an explicit focus on different theories and methodologies.
- Use appropriate sources and methods to construct an integrated and comparative perspective of cultural periods, events, or ideas that influence human perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
- Evaluate social and ethical implications in cultural studies.

How this course attains these goals and outcomes: In this course, you will develop your capacities to critically analyze, interpret and evaluate prominent historical and contemporary philosophical arguments and theories.

Class Conduct This class will be heavily discussion based. And we will discuss very sensitive political and religious topics, so even if we disagree with someone else, we must voice that disagreement in a respectful manner and treat all the members of class with human dignity. If we want to, as a class, we may develop a list of conversational ground rules for our discussions. Also, do not use cellphones once class starts and please do not email, Internet shop, or social media scroll during class.

Carmen All course content such as announcements, slides, assignments, grades and required readings (or videos or podcast episodes) will be made available on Carmen (or be made available via an Internet link on Carmen). You are expected to do the readings *before* the class for which the reading is assigned. Check Carmen regularly. What is assigned on Carmen takes precedence over the assignments/readings detailed on the syllabus. Contact me via *email*, *instead* of via the Carmen messaging.

Materials All of the assigned reading/watching/listening material will be available for free on Carmen or available free through the Internet via a link on Carmen. There are no required

textbooks for the class. That being said, if you want to buy the two classic works we will focus on (for your own personal library), you can purchase these two books:

1. *Plato: Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, Hackett Classics, Second Edition. By Plato, translated by G.M.A. Grube, and revised by John M. Cooper. ISBN = 978-0872206335.
2. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Hackett, 4th Ed. By Rene Descartes and translated by Donald A. Cress. ISBN = 978-0872204201.

Requirements and Grading Your overall course grade will be assigned based on the following components (with the corresponding percentage of overall grade for the assignment given in parenthesis):

- Initial reflection paper (5%). Due Aug 28th at 11:59pm.
- Argument summary/critique 1 (10%).
- Midterm paper (10%).
- External philosophy research project (10%).
- Argument summary/critique 2 (15%).
- Final paper. (25%).
- Final reflection paper (5%).
- Participation and attendance (20%).

This list of assignments is in chronological order. Detailed assignment sheets for each assignment will be distributed closer to the time of assignment, though some minimal detail for each portion of your grade can be found in the next section of this syllabus. Tentative due dates will be given below. There will be no extra credit in this class.

Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

The **initial reflection paper** will be a short paper (500-1000 words) in which you describe your personal philosophical beliefs regarding some of the topics of our class. I expect you to offer some reasoning for the beliefs you hold, but not much reasoning as we will have only just begun our introduction to philosophy at this point in the semester. Hopefully, you will compare this paper with your **final reflection paper** (same length) at the course's end so that you can see how much you have grown as a philosopher.

You will be assigned **two argument summary/critiques**. The first will be due rather early in the semester and will be worth 10% of your grade. The second will be assigned after the external philosophy project, and will be worth 15% of your grade since you will have gotten constructive feedback on your first set of writing assignments by then. I expect the argument summaries to be 500-1000 words long. They will each consist of two parts. Around half of it should be summarizing the assigned argument (taken from our readings or lectures), and the second part should be devoted to offering a clearly expressed and plausible criticism of the argument summarized in section one.

You will be assigned **two papers**. The midterm will be worth 10% of your grade. The second will be assigned after your second summary/critique assignment, and will be worth 25%

of your grade since you will have gotten constructive feedback on many writing assignments by then. I expect the papers to be 1000-1500 words long. They will each consist of three parts. The first section should be devoted to clearly explaining the argument assigned (taken from our readings or lectures). The second section should be devoted to offering a plausible critique of that argument. And the final section will involve you offering a rebuttal to the objection you discussed in section two.

The **external philosophy research project** is intended as a project for students to examine how wide-ranging the world of philosophy is and to do a short research project on a philosophical issue, movement, or philosopher of their choice. A pre-approved list of philosophers, movements, and issues will be distributed, but students can choose another topic if they meet with me weeks before the due date to get topic approval. The end-product can be an essay of 500-1000 words or a powerpoint presentation of 300-800 words. Students can work alone on this project or work in small groups (the groups can be no larger than a group of four).

Participation and attendance. Please read the assigned reading material *before* class for the day that it was assigned. Everyone is expected to participate in the class in some capacity, whether it be in small group discussion, by asking questions, or by participating in whole-class discussions. A note will be made of participation in lectures, and your participation grade will rise the more one conscientiously participates. A conscientious participant is one who makes respectful contributions to the discussion, not one who tries to dominate it or change the subject. Conscientious participation also requires being familiar with the material before class begins. As for attendance, it will be recorded and kept up with via exit cards. Most class periods, I will distribute index cards where you are to write a question or comment that you had about the material for the day. Make sure to write your full name on them legibly as they will serve as the way I take attendance during lectures. You are allowed up to **four** absences, no questions asked. That is, you can miss four lectures, for any reason whatsoever, with no penalty to you. Starting with the fifth day missed, however, a point will be dropped from your participation and attendance grade for every further day missed. This means, for example, if you miss six lectures, the **maximum** participation and attendance grade you will be able to receive will be an 18 out of 20. Of course this attendance policy is up to negotiation on a one-on-one level if you are suffering from a more severe illness, facing some traumatic life event during the semester, or are a student-athlete with the University-approved travel documentation. If any of this applies to you or if you have any questions about the attendance policy (or any other grading policy), please just come see me or email me. I'm happy to discuss things with any of you.

Late Assignments Extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances (or, of course, if you have an accommodation from SDLS which involves an extension). That being said, please email me ASAP if you need an extension because of some emergency. Late submissions of assignments will lose 5 points per day. No credit will be given after 5 days.

Instructor Feedback and Response Time For every assignment, I will have grades returned to the students within 14 days of submission. If you need to contact me out of class, please email me at dewitt.197@osu.edu directly. I have technical difficulties getting Carmen messages, so if you message me via Carmen do not expect me to receive your message. I will respond to emails within about 24 hours on weekdays and around 48 hours on weekends.

Grading Scale We will use the OSU Standard Grade Scheme:

- 93-100: A

- 90-92.9: A-
- 87-89.9: B+
- 83-86.9: B
- 80-82.9: B-
- 77-79.9: C+
- 73-76.9: C
- 70-72.9: C-
- 67-69.9: D+
- 60-66.9: D
- Below 60: E

Disability Services The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Academic Misconduct Academic misconduct is a serious offense. You are responsible for knowing what counts as academic misconduct. You are also expected not to commit it. In accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-5-487, all suspected cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the university's Committee on Academic Misconduct who will then be responsible for investigating or establishing procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

We will discuss what and how to cite sources for philosophical writing as we go through our first set of writing assignments. We will also discuss which online resources are the most reliable sources for writing philosophy.

Commitment to a diverse and inclusive learning environment The Ohio State University arms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Your Mental Health As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learn, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. No matter where you are engaged in distance learning, The Ohio State University's Student Life Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) is here to support you. If you find yourself feeling isolated, anxious or overwhelmed, on-demand resources are available at go.osu.edu/ccsondemand. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766, and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at go.osu.edu/wellnessapp.

Tentative Course Schedule

The schedule below is tentative. Any unexpected changes to the schedule will be announced on Carmen as the course proceeds. The materials under the date are mandatory readings, unless specifically labeled as merely recommended. Do not read the recommended readings unless you want to. If you are a philosophy major or minor (or thinking about becoming one), it's best to do most of the recommendations.

Week One

August 24th Introduction

■ Read the Syllabus

August 26th Introduction

■ Read "Introduction: On the Study of Philosophy" and "Logical Toolkit" by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (2010).

Week Two

August 31st Epistemology

■ Read excerpts from *Theaetetus* by Plato (written c. 369 BC). Read "Writing Philosophy Papers" by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (2010).

September 2nd Epistemology

■ Read "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge" by Edmund Gettier (1963). Read "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" and "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" by Jim Pryor.

Week Three

September 7th Epistemology, Religion, & Mind

■ Read "Meditations I - III" by Rene Descartes (1641). Recommended: Watch *The Matrix* by L. Wachowski & L. Wachowski (1999).

September 9th Epistemology, Religion, & Mind

■ Read "Meditations IV - VI" by Rene Descartes (1641). Recommended: Read "Brains in a Vat" by Hilary Putnam (1981).

Week Four

September 14th Epistemology & Mind

■ Read "Correspondence to Descartes" by Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia (1643). Read "Anton Wilhelm Amo: The African Philosopher in 18th Century Europe" by Dwight Lewis (2018).

September 16th Epistemology

Watch “PHILOSOPHY - Epistemology: Three Responses to Skepticism [HD]” and “PHILOSOPHY - Epistemology: New Responses to Skepticism [HD]” by Wireless Philosophy (2016).

Week Five

September 21st God & Religion

Read excerpts from “Philosophy of Religion” by Chad Meister. Read excerpts from *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas Aquinas (written circa 1274). Recommended: Read “Concepts of God and Models of the God-world Relation” by B.P. Glöck (2017).

September 23rd God & Religion

Read excerpts from “Why I Am Not a Christian” by Bertrand Russell (1927).

Recommended: Read the entire “Why I Am Not a Christian” essay.

Week Six

September 28th God & Religion

Read excerpts from *The Proslogion* by St. Anselm (1078). Watch “Anselm & the Argument for God: Crash Course Philosophy #9” by CrashCourse (2016).

September 30th God & Religion

Read excerpts from *Natural Theology* by William Paley (1802). Read excerpts from *Philosophy of Biology* by Elliott Sober (2000).

Week Seven

October 5th God & Religion

Read excerpts from *Philosophy of Biology* by Elliott Sober (2000). Watch “Intelligent Design: Crash Course Philosophy 11” by CrashCourse (2016).

October 7th God & Religion

Read “Logical Problem of Evil” by James Beebe.

Week Eight - No Class - Fall Break

Week Nine

October 19th God & Ethics

Read *Euthyphro* by Plato (written c. 380 BC). Recommended: Listen to the episodes concerning Plato over the next few weeks from the *History of Philosophy without Any Gaps* podcast by Peter Adamson.

October 21st Ethics & The Good Life

Read excerpts from *Republic* by Plato (written c. 375 BC). Watch “PHILOSOPHY - The Good Life: Plato [HD]” by Wireless Philosophy (2015). Recommended: Read “Why Be Moral? Can the Psychological Literature on Well-Being Shed any Light?” by Valerie Tiberius (2013).

Week Ten

October 26th Ethics & The Good Life

Watch “Confucius - How To Be Happy (Confucianism)” by Philosophies for Life. Watch “PHILOSOPHY - The Good Life: Aristotle [HD]” by Wireless Philosophy (2015).

Recommended: if you’re interested in ethics (questions about how we should live our lives and treat others), then read *A Concise Introduction to Ethics* by Shafer-Landau (2020) or sign up for my PHIL 1300!

October 28th The Meaning of Life

Read “The Meaning of Life” by Thaddeus Metz (2021). Recommended: Watch *The Seventh*

Seal by Ingmar Bergman (1957).

Week Eleven

November 2nd The Meaning of Life

Read “The Meaning of Life in Buddhism” by Masao Abe (2003).

November 4th Death & The Afterlife

Read “Is Immortality Desirable” by Felipe Pereira (2020). Read “Is Death Bad? Epicurus and Lucretius on the Fear of Death” by Frederik Kaufman (2020).

Week Twelve

November 9th Death & The Afterlife

Read *Phaedo* by Plato (written c. 375 BC).

November 11th

No Class - Veteran’s Day.

Week Thirteen

November 16th Political Philosophy

Read *Crito* by Plato (written c. 375 BC).

November 18th Philosophy of Race

Read “Critical Philosophy of Race” by Linda Alcoff (2021). Recommended: Listen to “OMNIA Podcast by Penn Arts & Sciences: Philosophy of Race” by Penn Arts & Sciences (2019).

Week Fourteen - No Class - Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen

November 30th Philosophy of Gender

Read “Feminist Metaphysics” by Sally Haslanger & Ásta (2017).

December 2nd Purpose & Value of Philosophy

Read *Apology* by Plato (written c. 375 BC).

Week Sixteen

December 7th Purpose & Value of Philosophy

Read “The Value of Philosophy” by Bertrand Russell (1969).

Important Assignment Dates (Also Tentative!)

Initial reflection paper Aug. 28th at 11:59pm

Argument summary/critique 1 .. Sep. 25th at 11:59pm

Midterm essay Oct. 9th at 11:59pm

External philosophy project Oct. 23rd at 11:59pm

Argument summary/critique 2 .. Nov. 13th at 11:59pm

Final paper Dec. 4th at 11:59pm

Final reflection Dec. 11th at 11:59pm