

# Teaching Portfolio

**Jason DeWitt**

Department of Philosophy  
The Ohio State University  
University Hall  
Columbus, OH 43210

[dewitt.197@osu.edu](mailto:dewitt.197@osu.edu)

## Table of Contents

I.	Teaching Statement .....	2
II.	Selection of Courses I am Prepared to Teach .....	5
III.	Quantitative and Qualitative Feedback on My Teaching.....	6
IV.	Other Experiences Relevant to Teaching.....	10
V.	Sample Syllabi.....	11

## I. Teaching Statement

I love teaching philosophy. I try to get students to engage with philosophy in ways that reflect their concern for the topic and its role in their lives. I converse with and learn philosophy from and with my students. I'm inspired witnessing their progression with philosophical and logical skills. My approach to teaching reflects these motivations.

**Giving my students the resources to see that philosophy is important to their lives.** It's really important to me that my students leave my courses with a sense of philosophy's importance to their lives. I often begin my classes by stressing that, insofar as philosophy is the critical evaluation of one's fundamental concepts and values, and since one's fundamental concepts and values inform everything one believes and does, philosophy is a way to become more fully oneself. It's the way to find and endorse certain beliefs and values as truly one's own.

To instill that very personal conception of philosophy, I ask my students, at the beginning of the course, to do an "initial reflection paper." They are given a list of the various philosophical questions that we intend to cover throughout the course. They are asked, before learning much philosophy at all, to give their first-pass answer to their choice of the philosophical questions. At the course's end, I ask them to do a "final reflection paper" where they are asked to do the same things. At the end, the students can see how much learning and practicing philosophy has changed their beliefs on these fundamental questions. Of course, not everyone, perhaps not even most students, change their beliefs drastically over the course of the semester. But most of my students have changed their reasons by the end of the course and this is often very inspiring to see. (One semester, I had two students, one who went from being religious to atheist, and the other vice versa!) The students are asked to compare their initial reflection to the final one, and I think many of my students really appreciate seeing how much they've grown and changed.

Another way that I try to develop a personal attachment and concern with philosophy in my students is by having an "external philosopher research paper." This is another low stakes assignment where my students are asked to do a short report on any philosopher of their choosing (ideally, one that we haven't discussed in class). I've found that students really appreciate this assignment and many develop a considerable interest in the figure that they've chosen. I think allowing for this level of autonomy in what philosophy the students investigate really inspires a lot of buy-in and further inculcates the idea that philosophy is something that they can have a personal attachment to.

I also try to encourage the thought in my students that philosophy can be done well by anyone and has been done well by people from all cultural and demographic backgrounds. It's easy, especially for beginning philosophy students, to think that philosophy is the exclusive provenance of long-dead European men. I try to counteract this attitude by having thoroughly diversified course content and by emphasizing visual representation of all the philosophers we study. For example, in my latest iteration of Introduction to Philosophy, I cover, in addition to some Western philosophy, some medieval Islamic, ancient Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist, American Indian, and West African philosophy. Along

the way, I try to show the students what the philosophers we are studying look like. I think visual representation matters. If students see that philosophy is something done by every conceivable culture and demographic, they will be more inclined to think philosophy is something they can be personally connected and invested in, and not just something belonging to a privileged and psychosocially-distant group.

**Putting conversation at the center of my classroom.** Another conception of philosophy that I try to stress is philosophy as a conversation. I've found that, when conceived of as a conversation, students find philosophy more approachable and as something easier to engage with.

I make a lot of room for small group discussion so that students can try out their own philosophical ideas in a low-stakes context. I pause for small group discussion often during class. I also begin class with an icebreaker question. Sometimes these are philosophical questions, other times they are of the more classic icebreaker form. These icebreaker discussions are low-stakes, fun ways of getting conversation going. I've found that if students get to know each other by discussing their favorite songs and movies, for example, they develop a social bond that allows them to more freely discuss the existence of God or the immortality of the soul later.

**Helping my students develop their philosophical skills.** A lot of what I've discussed above certainly helps my students hone various philosophical skills: skills having to do with philosophical conversation and reflection. But I want to stress here some other methods I use to help them hone their critical thinking, analytical writing, and persuasive writing skills.

One of the most fundamental philosophical skills is critical thinking and the ability to evaluate arguments. I try to stress to my students that we encounter arguments in various forms across all kinds of media. While I do, of course, assign primary source readings in my courses, I also think it's important that my students be able to develop their critical thinking and argument evaluation skills with regards to non-print media. There's a lot of argumentation on YouTube, TikTok, television news, etc., and I think it is increasingly important that we help our students develop their philosophical and logical skills in ways that apply to these media forms. To that extent, I try to assign a considerable amount of philosophical YouTube videos, podcast episodes, and, sometimes, films, in addition to our assigned reading. I think this helps the students develop their logical and philosophical skills in eminently useful ways while also further emphasizing just how important such skills will apply to their everyday lives.

I've also developed a regimen of scaffolded writing assignments that I think greatly helps my students develop their abilities to write persuasive, analytical papers and to finely craft their critical thinking about philosophical topics. After the initial reflection paper, my courses often start with a low-stakes paper where the students are asked to provide a simple summary of some argument and a critique of it. I really find that the low-stakes nature of the first few assignments really eases students into philosophical writing in a way that reduces the stressors and fears on their end. After that first "summary & critique", I have a slightly higher-stake mid-term paper where the students are asked to practice the same skills they've already practiced (ie, writing an argument summary and critique), but are also asked to add a response section to their critique section. In the second half of the

course, they repeat the process (first an argument summary & critique, then a “full” 3 section paper), this time with slightly higher stakes. This assignment structure provides the students with plenty of opportunities to practice and improve the same philosophical skills in a way that builds their confidence.

I provide rather detailed “assignment sheets” for each assignment. These assignment sheets, besides providing basic instructions, also describe my expectations and the main moves any ideal paper would include (in a way that still leaves room for the students to showcase their own philosophical creativity). My students really appreciate the clarity and detail of these assignment sheets, with many students informing me that the assignment design allows them to (i) approach the paper with few stressors, (ii) get deeper into the philosophical dialectic than if they had no specific guidance, and (iii) actually enjoy writing papers! This last point especially strikes me as an achievement to be proud of. (I’ll include example assignment sheets below in the teaching portfolio.)

Each of these motivations and practices mutually reinforce each other. For some examples: practicing philosophical conversation helps refine philosophical skills, seeing how philosophy personally affects oneself increases the quality and depth of conversation, and practicing the evaluation of arguments found across various media helps instill the idea to the students that they will employ these skills across their everyday life. When these practices and goals are implemented together, I’ve been able, with indispensable aid from my wonderful students, to achieve a classroom of engaged and skilled participants in the great conversation that is philosophy.

## II. Selection of Courses I am Prepared to Teach

I have designed and taught the following courses as a **primary instructor**. (Syllabi for these courses are included in section V of this portfolio.) I am prepared to continue teaching any of these courses.

- Introduction to Philosophy
- Introduction to Logic
- Logic and Legal Reasoning
- Contemporary Social and Moral Problems
- Engineering Ethics
- Philosophy of Science
- Death and the Meaning of Life

I have served as a *teaching assistant* for the following courses:

- Introduction to Symbolic Logic
- Introduction to Philosophy
- Philosophical Problems in the Arts
- Ancient Philosophy
- Metaphysics
- Philosophy of Mind
- Introduction to Asian Religions

In addition to the courses I've already taught, *I am prepared to teach courses in the following subjects:*

- Metaphysics
- History of Analytic Philosophy
- Introduction to Ethics

Additionally, I am very interested in developing and teaching courses in several other areas, particularly, the following:

- Pragmatism
- Philosophy of Language
- Philosophy of Mathematics
- Environmental Ethics

### III. Quantitative and Qualitative Feedback on My Teaching

#### Quantitative Feedback.

The tables below include all the quantitative feedback, gathered from Ohio State's anonymized student survey system, regarding my performance as an instructor.

The numbered columns in the table correspond to ten survey prompts. For each prompt, students are asked to report their agreement on a five-point scale (with higher points indicating higher agreement). These are the ten prompts:

1. The subject matter of this course was well-organized.
2. This course was intellectually stimulating.
3. This instructor was genuinely interested in teaching.
4. The instructor encouraged students to think for themselves.
5. The instructor was well prepared.
6. The instructor was genuinely interested in helping students.
7. I learned a great deal from this instructor.
8. The instructor created an atmosphere conducive to learning.
9. The instructor communicated the subject matter clearly.
10. Overall, I would rate this instructor as... (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = neutral, 4 = good, 5 = excellent)

The column indicating "Comparison Group Mean" represents the mean score for similar classes, based on class size and other course characteristics at Ohio State.

Here is the table for the courses for which I was the **primary instructor** (Summer 2022 to Summer 2025). Each of the three occurrences of Engineering Ethics was taught asynchronously online. The original reports are available upon request.

Course and term	Students responding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Comparison group mean
Engineering Ethics (SU 2022)	68%	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.39
Intro to Philosophy (AU 2022)	84%	4.5	4.7	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.40
Engineering Ethics (SP 2023)	50%	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.41
Engineering Ethics (SU 2023)	21%	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.3	4.43
Logic and Legal Reasoning (AU 2023)	48%	4.8	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.4	4.8	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.39

Intro to Philosophy (SP 2024)	50%	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.3	4.8	4.41
Intro to Logic (SU 2024)	79%	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.49
Engineering Ethics for a Just and Diverse World (AU 2024)	18%	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.86	5	5	4.39
Intro to Philosophy of Science (SP 2025)	76%	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.42
Contemporary Social and Moral Problems (SU 2025)	33%	5	5	5	4.67	4.67	4.67	5	5	4.67	4.67	TBD

Here is the corresponding table for my time as a **teaching assistant** at Ohio State (Spring 2021 to Spring 2022):

Course and term	Students responding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Comparison group mean
Intro to Symbolic Logic (SP 2021)	59%	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.5	3.9	4.6	4.2	4.0	4.41
Intro to Philosophy (AU 2021), section 1	45%	4.3	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.3	4.6	4.41
Intro to Philosophy (AU 2021), section 2	51%	3.9	3.8	4.4	4.1	3.8	4.2	3.6	4.0	3.9	4.3	4.41
Intro to Symbolic Logic (SP 2022)	45%	3.0	4.1	4.6	4.2	4.1	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.44

## **Qualitative Feedback.**

Ohio State's anonymized student survey system invites students to submit comments. Below, I have included some of these comments from the courses I have taught. The reports from which these comments are taken are available upon request.

I've organized the comments into groups by theme. Each group concerns an aspect of my teaching that has been noticed by multiple students across my courses.

### **Communicating complex ideas:**

- "Jason was a very good teacher, he communicated complex ideas to the best of his ability and was an engaging and entertaining instructor. I enjoyed going to class!"
- "I really enjoyed this course. I appreciated Jason's attitude toward teaching serious topics such as religion and death. Jason was very good at explaining ancient arguments with language we would better understand and using relatable examples."
- "Super fun guy who is really easy to talk to. Tells you exactly what you need to know and how to think about it without bogging you down with unnecessary details. Class is always a fun time and Jason always finds a way to communicate the material."
- "This class overall was well thought out and we discussed many different interesting topics. It was very easy to participate in class. He did a great job of explaining hard topics and was very good at answering all of our questions."
- "One my favorite classes I've taken so far. Class was very engaging and interesting. I never found a class confusing or too difficult to grasp, as topics were explained really well. Thank you for such a great class – I'm considering a philosophy minor now!"

### **Providing students with a welcoming learning environment:**

- "This guy was clearly passionate about what he was teaching and did a good job of fostering relationships with his students throughout the entire course."
- "I loved professor DeWitt. You can tell that he really cares about philosophy and about his students. He made an effort to learn all of our names even though it was a pretty big class and he always remembered things that we had mentioned about our lives which was really nice. His assignments were always intellectually stimulating and I thought the instructions were very clear and easy to understand. I really enjoyed his class, he's a great lecturer. He is easily distracted at times but sometimes the distractedness would lead to the best conversations. The class atmosphere was very relaxed and I felt like he really cared about what we thought as a class."



- “Jason was a fantastic instructor. I appreciate that he had a holistic approach to teaching and philosophy as a whole. We frequently chatted in small groups which promoted an inclusive learning atmosphere and improved everyone’s comfortability in the class. He took the time to get to know each person individually, which made you feel like you belonged in that classroom. Jason also taught several focuses within philosophy rather than just one without jeopardizing the depth at which we learned. He also had us fill out notecards that he would use to review topics and answer any questions. I can tell Jason will be an excellent professor once he finishes his PhD, and will continue to be a great instructor. You’d think he has been teaching for 10+ years.”
- “You did very well and got me more interested in learning philosophy to the point that I would like to minor in it. This course was very encouraging and engaging.”
- “I think this course was very engaging and that it was organized very well. He did a great job at trying to get everyone involved in the class and invested in both what he was teaching and their work.”
- “I really enjoyed this class, and Jason did a phenomenal job teaching it. One of the best if not the best grad student lecturers I have had. Was very good at engaging the entire class, took care to learn everyone’s names early on, encouraged small group and class discussion during every class period. I especially like that questions were welcome no matter how irrelevant, and taken serious to be responded to not with personal opinion, but within the context of what we were learning that day. I really enjoyed this class overall!”
- “Good engaged professor who actively participated in class and engaged students on a day-to-day basis.”

#### **Helping students think through their own beliefs:**

- “Having Jason as a professor was a bright spot in my week. He is my favorite professor and I always was ready to participate in class as the material was always interesting. His teaching and the class have changed my outlook on life and I am considering a philosophy minor because of professor Jason.”
- “I really enjoyed how this course is structured and how the instructor encourages his students to think about and absorb any of the new topics he is introducing. His way of teaching has allowed me to re-evaluate my beliefs and view of certain topics.”
- “Amazing professor! I was originally in another class (history), but I’m so glad I made the choice to take this one instead! Really opened up my eyes and I was interested in everything that was taught.”

#### **Helping students produce philosophy via crafted assignments and feedback:**

- “Jason made philosophy very interesting to me. I loved the way he conducted his classes, and the essays I had to do were not a hassle but rather fun.”

- Throughout the entire semester, Jason has served as a great teacher. The way he organized the course, in my opinion, is a perfect way to start learning about philosophy. He covered a large variety of topics without sacrificing any details or chance to give the subjects thought. I thought the prompts for all of the papers were engaging and enjoyed the fact that he always gave us options.”
- “I loved this professor and class. I was able to both learn a lot and remain interested in the material and I know a lot of the other students feel the same. Was super grateful he was willing to go over papers and give actual good feedback.”

**Really nice feedback I can’t help but include:**

- “This was the best professor I have had in my college career.”
- “I honestly believe that Jason was one of the best instructors that I have had in college so far.”
- “Best instructor I have ever had.”

#### **IV. Other Experiences Related to Teaching**

While at Ohio State, I've been able to benefit from teaching experiences outside of my own classes. I will briefly describe those experiences here.

##### **American Association of Philosophy Teacher's 2024 Seminar on Teaching and Learning:**

I was accepted to participate in the American Association of Philosophy Teacher's bi-yearly seminar on Teaching and Learning in philosophy. [Say more once it is done....]

##### **Graduate course on Teaching Philosophy:**

In the fourth year of my PhD program, I took a course on teaching philosophy with Tristram McPherson. In this course, I learned about student engagement strategies, active learning activities, inclusive pedagogy, student metacognition, and lesson planning. I practiced these skills (and others) at the end of the course by teaching a lesson on the epistemology of mathematics to the wonderful high schoolers in the IB Theory of Knowledge course at Columbus Alternative High School.

##### **Departmental workshops:**

Over the years at OSU, I've participated in a variety of departmental workshops and panels intended to improve pedagogical skills. I've participated in workshops on "Using Backwards Design Principles to Create DEIJA Philosophy Courses," the "Basics of Effective Design for Asynchronous Online Courses," "Design Choices for Engineering Ethics," "Designing Assignments Worth Grading," the "Basics of Lesson Planning," "Active Learning in Discussion-Based Classes," "Writing in the Philosophy Classroom," "Syllabi," "Assignment Design," and a faculty panel on engineering ethics.

## **V. Sample Syllabi**

I include three sample syllabi from courses I have taught. The first is from my latest iteration of Introduction to Philosophy (page 13). The second is from my Engineering Ethics (for a Just and Diverse World) course (page 21). The third is from my Introduction to Philosophy of Science course (page 30). I've also included a proposed syllabus for an upper-level undergraduate course on the history of analytic philosophy.

# PHIL 1100: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2024  
The Ohio State University

---

<b>Instructor</b>	Jason DeWitt
<b>Office</b>	337e University Hall
<b>Contact</b>	dewitt.197@osu.edu
<b>Office Hours</b>	W 1pm-3pm or by appointment
<b>Class Time</b>	WF 9:35am - 10:55am
<b>Class Location</b>	Mendenhall Lab 125

---

**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, the nature of personhood, the divine, and the source of morality. We will end the course by discussing ethics and the value of a philosophical life.

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 a little bit of it all: looking primarily at discussions of God and personhood in Western, Chinese, Indian, Native American, Islamic, and African philosophy.

Besides familiarizing students with classic topics and works from these philosophical traditions, 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 in the Western canon. 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 one of the classic works we will focus on (for your own personal library), you can purchase this book:

1. *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%).
- Argument summary/critique (10%).
- Midterm paper (20%).
- External philosophy research project (10%).
- Final paper. (30%).
- 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 an **argument summary/critique**. It will be due rather early in the semester and will be worth 10% of your grade. I expect the argument summary to be 500-1000 words long. It will 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. It is a low stakes way to practice the sort of skills you need on the midterm and final papers.

You will be assigned **two papers**. The midterm will be worth 20% of your grade. The final will be worth 30% of your grade since you will have gotten constructive feedback on several writing assignments by then. I expect the papers to be 1100-1700 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 a couple of 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 three).

**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. A conscientious participant **MUST** make an effort to ask an on-topic question with their exit cards. 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. (No need to email me or even let me know when you're going to absent!) 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.

**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](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://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](http://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](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at [go.osu.edu/wellnessapp](http://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 a majority of the recommendations.

### Week One

January 10th ..... Introduction

■ Read the Syllabus.

January 12th ..... Introduction

■ Read (1) "Introduction: On the Study of Philosophy" and (2) "Logical Toolkit" by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (2010).

### Week Two

January 17th ..... God

■ Read (1) excerpts from *Summa Theologica* by St. Thomas Aquinas (written circa 1274) and (2) section 2.1 of "Arabic and Islamic Philosophy of Religion" by McGinnis and Acar.

January 19th ..... God

■ Read (1) excerpts from "Why I Am Not a Christian" by Bertrand Russell (1927) and read (2) "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" by Jim Pryor. Recommended: Read the entire "Why I Am Not a Christian" essay.

### Week Three

January 24th ..... God

■ Read (1) excerpts from *The Proslogion* by St. Anselm (1078) and (2) section 2.2 of "Arabic and Islamic Philosophy of Religion" by McGinnis and Acar. Recommended: watch "Anselm & the Argument for God: Crash Course Philosophy #9" by CrashCourse (2016).

January 26th ..... God

■ Read (1) "The Problem of Evil" by Metcalf and (2) "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper" by Jim Pryor.

### Week Four

January 31st ..... Epistemology, God, & Self

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

February 2nd ..... Epistemology, God, & Self

■ Read (1) "Descartes' Meditations 4-6" (2011) by Marc Bobro and (2) "al-Ghazālī's Dream Argument for Skepticism" (2020) by John Ramsey. Recommended: if you want to read the actual text of Descartes's *Meditations*, then read IV-VI instead of the Dobro. Also recommended: read "Brains in a Vat" by Hilary Putnam (1981).

### Week Five

February 7th ..... Epistemology, God & Self

■ Read (1) "Correspondence to Descartes" by Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia (1643) and (2) "Anton Wilhelm Amo: The African Philosopher in 18th Century Europe" by Dwight Lewis (2018).

February 9th ..... Epistemology, God, & Self

Watch (1) “PHILOSOPHY - Epistemology: Three Responses to Skepticism [HD]” (2016) and (2) “PHILOSOPHY - Epistemology: New Responses to Skepticism [HD]” (2016) by Wireless Philosophy.

### Week Six

February 14th ..... Personal Identity

Read (1) sections 1-4 of “Personal Identity” (2023) by Eric Olson and (2) “Writing Philosophy Papers” by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (2010).

February 16th ..... Personal Identity

Watch (1) “PHILOSOPHY - History: Locke on Personal Identity #2” (2014) and (2) “PHILOSOPHY - History: Locke on Personal Identity #3” (2014) by Wireless Philosophy.

### Week Seven

February 21st ..... Personal Identity

Read selections from *Reasons and Persons* (1984) by Derek Parfit.

February 23rd ..... Self & God

Guest lecture by Pranav Ambardekar. Reading TBD.

### Week Eight

February 28th ..... No-Self

Read (1) sections 1-2 of “Buddha” (2023) by Mark Sideritis and (2) “The Buddhist Theory of No-Self (Anātman/Anattā)” (2023) by Daniel Weltman.

March 1st ..... No-Self

Read (1) sections 3-4 of “Buddha” (2023) by Mark Sideritis and (2) “Was Hume a Secret Buddhist” (2019) by Rachel Paine.

### Week Nine

March 6th ..... Selfhood

Read “A Theory of Confucian Selfhood: Self-Cultivation and Free Will in Confucian Philosophy” (2004) by Chung-ying Cheng. Recommended: “The Chinese Conception of Selfhood” (1999) by Roger Ames.

March 8th ..... Selfhood

Read “Soul and Self: Comparing Chinese Philosophy and Greek Philosophy” (2008) by Jiyuan Yu. Recommended: “Thirteen Ways of Looking at the Self in Early China” (2009) by Lisa Raphals.

### SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS! March 13th and 15th

### Week Ten

March 20th ..... Personhood

Read “Akan Philosophy of the Person” (2006) by Ajume Wingo. Recommended: “Akan Concept of a Person” (1971) by Kwame Gyekye.

March 22nd ..... Personhood

Read “Akan and Euro-American Concepts of the Person” by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Recommended: “Self as a Problem in African Philosophy” (1992) by Chukwudum B. Okolo.

### Week Eleven

March 27th ..... Personhood

Read “Common Themes in American Indian Philosophy” (2010) by Norton-Smith.

March 29th ..... Personhood

Read “An Expansive Concept of Persons” (2010) by Norton-Smith. Recommended: read “The Dance of Person and Place” (2010) by Norton-Smith.

### Week Twelve

April 3rd ..... Personhood

Read “Feminist Perspectives on the Self” (2020) by Ellie Anderson and Cynthia Willett.

April 5th ..... Personhood & Animals

Read “Theories of Moral Considerability: Who and What Matters Morally?” (2022) by Jonathan Spelman. Recommended: “Nonhuman Persons” (2021) by Gerard Elfstrom.

### Week Thirteen

April 10th ..... Source of Morality

Read *Euthyphro* by Plato (written c. 380 BC).

April 12th ..... Morality

Read: “Why Be Good? Plato” from Notre Dame. Recommended: Watch “Confucius - How To Be Happy (Confucianism)” by Philosophies for Life. Watch “PHILOSOPHY - The Good Life: Aristotle [HD]” by Wireless Philosophy.

### Week Fourteen

April 17th ..... The Meaning of Life

Read “The Meaning of Life” by Thaddeus Metz (2021). Recommended: Watch *The Seventh Seal* by Ingmar Bergman (1957).

April 19th ..... Purpose & Value of Philosophy

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

### Important Assignment Dates (Also Tentative!)

Initial reflection paper ..... Jan. 21st at 11:59pm

Argument summary/critique .... Feb. 11th at 11:59pm

Midterm essay ..... Mar. 3rd at 11:59pm

External philosophy project ..... Apr. 7th at 11:59pm

Final paper ..... Apr. 21st at 11:59pm

Final reflection ..... Apr. 28th at 11:59pm

# PHIL 2332: ENGINEERING ETHICS FOR A JUST AND DIVERSE WORLD

Autumn 2024  
The Ohio State University

---

<b>Instructor</b>	Jason DeWitt
<b>Office</b>	337e University Hall
<b>Contact</b>	dewitt.197@osu.edu
<b>Office Hours</b>	Thursdays 2-4pm
<b>Class Time</b>	WF 9:35am - 10:55am
<b>Class Location</b>	Mendenhall Lab 175

---

**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. In this class, we will be focusing on the sub-field of philosophy called "ethics." Ethics is concerned with questions like the following: What is the morally right thing to do? Are there definite moral truths? Where do moral truths come from: God, our fellow human beings, or something else? Why should I be a good person whether or not there is an afterlife? We will be addressing some of these more general ethical questions, but we will focus on ethical questions concerning justice and diversity that arise in the context of professional engineering: Are the designs of certain devices and technologies contributing to social inequality, and if so, how can we stop this? How can engineers promote intersectional justice? How can engineers use their work to promote sustainability and combat environmental racism? What does it mean to achieve global justice and what is the engineer's role in this project? This is just a sampling of some of the engineering ethics questions we will address.

We will begin the course by thinking about whether ethics is objective or subjective and why one ought to be good. Then we'll start to examine major ethical traditions from across the history of philosophy so that we can apply different moral considerations to topics in engineering. Each of the major ethical theories has different answers as to what they think we should focus on in living ethical lives. Should we focus on the consequences of our actions, like how much happiness an action brings about? Should we focus on certain absolute moral rules like "don't lie"? Or should we focus on cultivating good habits like becoming and being more compassionate people?

As we begin to get some moral theory under our belts, we will alternate between moral theory and applied engineering ethics. We'll consider a variety of ethical issues pertaining to social justice and diversity within the engineering profession. We will think about the ethics of and approaches to racial justice, intersectional justice, environmental justice, global justice, human enhancement, and algorithmic justice. In reflecting on these issues of justice and diversity, we will also reflect on what it means to be a citizen of our community and our world.

Along the way, we will practice (i) writing persuasively about ethical matters, (ii) evaluating moral arguments, and (iii) critically reading about philosophical, moral, and political topics. The assignment structure is centered around one project that asks the student to integrate the course content with their own branch of engineering by employing the skills practiced

throughout the class. We'll do all sorts of individual and group activities along the way to break the main project into pieces, practice our skills, and create a vibrant, fun, safe, and open atmosphere in the classroom.

Hopefully, this trip through engineering ethics 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 progress.

**Course Goals** The following are the significant learning outcomes for students in this class. These goals determined the choice of course content, assignment design, and assignment structure: By the end of this course, the student will

1. Understand and remember ideas about moral considerations (i.e., theories about what ultimately matters in ethics).
2. Understand and remember information about issues surrounding social justice and diversity in professional engineering.
3. Apply moral considerations to novel situations and dilemmas in one's own branch of engineering.
4. Be able to identify and evaluate moral arguments.
5. Integrate the class material with your studies and career as an engineer.
6. Learn about your own moral sense and conclusions.
7. Care about earning their own moral conclusions.
8. Care about understanding moral conclusions different from your own.
9. Learn how to discuss and read about sensitive topics in an effort to learn from others.
10. Persuasively write about how you would apply moral considerations to novel situations and dilemmas in one's own branch of engineering.

**Prerequisites** GE Foundations in Writing and Information Literacy; Race, Ethnicity and Gender Diversity; and Historical and Cultural Studies.

**General Education Information** This is a course in the GE Theme: Citizenship for a Just and Diverse World. The goals of *Citizenship for a Just and Diverse World* GE courses include the following.

**Goal One:** Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than in the Foundations component. The associated expected outcomes for this goal are that successful students are able to:

1. Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.
2. Engage in advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.

**Goal Two:** Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future. The associated expected outcomes for this goal are that successful students are able to:

1. Identify, describe and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.
2. Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

**Goal Three:** Successful students will explore and analyze a range of perspectives on local, national or global citizenship, and apply the knowledge, skills and dispositions that constitute citizenship. The associated expected outcomes for this goal are that successful students are able to:

1. Describe and analyze a range of perspectives on what constitutes citizenship and how it differs across political, cultural, national, global, and/or historical communities
2. Identify, reflect on and apply the knowledge, skills and dispositions required for intercultural competence as a global citizen.

**Goal Four:** Successful students will examine notions of justice amidst difference and analyze and critique how these interact with historically and socially constructed ideas of citizenship and membership within society, both within the United States and around the world. The associated expected outcomes for this goal are that successful students are able to:

1. Examine, critique and evaluate various expressions and implications of diversity, equity and inclusion, and explore a variety of lived experiences.
2. Analyze and critique the intersection of concepts of justice, difference, citizenship, and how these interact with cultural traditions, structures of power and/or advocacy for social change.

Students will satisfy these expected learning outcomes through close reading of assigned texts, active participation in class discussion, successful completion of written assignments, and critical engagement with fellow students and the instructor.

**Class Conduct** This class will be heavily discussion based. And we will discuss very sensitive political and moral 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 discussion posts.

**Carmen** All course content such as announcements, slides, assignments, grades and required readings (or videos) will be made available on Carmen (or be made available via an Internet link on Carmen). You are expected to do the readings *before* 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 for faster responses.

**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.

**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%).
- Main project: issue identification stage (5%).
- Main project: group brainstorm stage (5%).
- Main project: annotated bibliography (15%).
- Main project: Issue explanation and possible solutions summary(15%)
- Main project: Issue, solutions, and critique draft (15%)
- Main project: final paper (20%)
- Final reflection paper (5%)
- Participation (15%)

Detailed assignment sheets for the assignments 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 Course Assignments

There will be two **reflection papers**, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. Your initial reflection paper will be a very short paper in which you describe your personal philosophical/moral 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. You will compare this paper with your final reflection paper at the course's end so that you can see how much you have grown as a philosopher. These will be short, low-stakes assignments.

Most of the course grade is centered around our **main project**. Altogether the main project accounts for 75% of the final grade. But it is broken up into many discrete steps or stages that build up towards a final product. Most of this project will be done on your own but some parts will involve group work. The details for each part will be explained as we proceed but roughly you will (i) identify an ethical issue concerning justice and/or diversity in your branch of engineering, (ii) brainstorm the different ethical dimensions and possible solutions to the issue, (iii) research the ethical issue and various solutions, creating an annotated bibliography of your research sources, (iv) write a short draft paper explaining the issue and possible solutions (employing your brainstorm and bibliography), (v) develop a new draft which adds on a critical assessment of a solution to the issue that you *do not* agree with, and (vi) a final paper (which builds on the previous drafts) in the form of a persuasive memo to one's colleagues (in one's own branch of engineering) defending a stance that should be taken regarding the chosen moral issue. The details of these assignments will be explained throughout the semester.

**Participation** will be calculated by how much one conscientiously and vocally participates in class. 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 group discussion, by asking questions, or by participating in whole-class discussions. A note will be made of participation in class, 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.



**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 11 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 quickly. 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](https://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](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at [go.osu.edu/wellnessapp](https://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. **Do all assignments, readings and video viewings before the corresponding class period.**

#### **Week One**

January 7th ..... Introduction

■ Read the Syllabus.

January 9th ..... Philosophy & Ethics

■ (1) Read "Introduction: On the Study of Philosophy" by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (2010). (2) Read "Moral Education" by Balg.

#### **Week Two**

January 14th ..... Ethical Questions & Codes

■ (1) Read selections from chs. 1-2 of *Ethics for Engineers* by Peterson. (2) "Watch How to Read Philosophy (for Beginners)" by Henderson.

January 16th ..... Meta-ethics

■ (1) Read "Why Be Moral?" by Case. (2) Explore the Notre Dame "Why Be Good? Plato" site.

#### **Week Three**

January 21st ..... Justice and Diversity in Engineering

█ (1) Read selections from chapter one of *Race After Technology* by Benjamin. (2) Read “Introduction” from *Invisible Women* by Criado Perez.

January 23rd ..... Meta-ethics

█ (1) Read “The Challenge of Moral Relativism” by Rachels. (2) Read “Cultural Relativism” by Nobis.

#### Week Four

September 11th ..... Meta-ethics

█ (1) Read “Ten Arguments Against Moral Objectivity” by Shafer-Landau. (2) Read “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper” by Pryor.

September 13th ..... Meta-ethics

█ Read “Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And So Are You)” by Enoch.

#### Week Five

September 18th ..... Intersectional Justice

█ Read “Race, Class, and the Social Construction of Self-Respect” by Moody-Adams.

September 20th ..... Intersectional Justice

█ (1) Read “The Default Male” in *Invisible Women* by Criado Perez. (2) Read “The Deadly Truth about a World Built for Men - From Stab Vests to Car Crashes” by Criado Perez.

#### Week Six

September 25th ..... Intersectional Justice

█ (1) Read “Pulse Oximeter Devices Have Higher Error Rate in Black Patients” by Caryn Rabin. (2) Read selections from “Disability and Technology: Building Barriers or Creating Opportunities” by Gregor, Sloan, and Newell

September 27th ..... Ethics for Engineers

█ (1) Read “Engineers in Organizations” by Harris.

#### Week Seven

October 2nd ..... Ethics for Engineers

█ Read “Killing and Letting Die” by Foot.

October 4th ..... Virtue Ethics

█ (1) Read selections from “Virtue Ethics” by Shafer-Landau. (2) Read “The Good Engineer: Giving Virtue Its Due in Engineering Ethics” by Harris.

#### Week Eight

October 9th ..... Virtue Ethics

█ Read selections from “Virtue Ethics” by Shafer-Landau.

October 11th ..... Fall Break

█ NO CLASS

#### Week Nine

October 16th ..... Utilitarianism

█ Read “What is Act Utilitarianism” by Feldman.

October 18th ..... Utilitarianism

█ (1) Read “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” by Singer. (2) Read selections from *Ethics for Engineers* by Peterson.

### Week Ten

October 23rd ..... Environmental Justice  
 Read “Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement” by Bullard.

October 25th ..... Environmental Justice  
 Read “Toward a Just Sustainability” by Agyeman.

### Week Eleven

October 30th ..... Deontology  
 (1) Read “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” by Rachels. (2) Watch “Kant & Categorical Imperatives: Crash Course Philosophy 35” by CrashCourse.

November 1st ..... Deontology  
 Read selections from *The Fundamentals of Ethics* by Shafer-Landau.

### Week Twelve

November 6th ..... Global Justice  
 Read “Global Environment and International Inequality” by Shue.

November 8th ..... Global Justice  
 Read “Where’s the Justice in Geoengineering?” by McLaren.

### Week Thirteen

November 13th ..... Human Enhancement  
 Read “The Case Against Perfectionism: what’s wrong with designer children, bionic athletes, and genetic engineering” by Sandel.

November 15th ..... Human Enhancement  
 Read “Life Enhancement Technologies and the Significance of Social Category Membership” by Overall.

### Week Fourteen

November 20th ..... Algorithmic Justice  
 Read “Machine Bias” by Angwin, Larson, Mattu, and Kirchner.

November 22nd ..... Algorithmic Justice  
 Read “Retooling Solidarity, Reimagining Justice” by Benjamin.

### Week Fifteen

December 4th ..... Final Day  
 No new reading.

### Important Assignment Dates (Also Tentative!)

*\*\*Every assignment is due at 11:59 on the assigned day.\*\**

Initial reflection paper .....	September 1st
Issue identification submission .....	September 22nd
Brainstorm discussion board .....	September 29th
Annotated bibliography .....	October 13th
Issue and solutions summary draft .....	October 27th
Issues, solutions, and critique draft .....	November 17th
Final reflection .....	December 1st
Main project: final paper .....	December 8th

# PHIL 2650: INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Spring 2025  
The Ohio State University

---

<b>Instructor</b>	Jason DeWitt
<b>Office</b>	337e University Hall
<b>Contact</b>	dewitt.197@osu.edu
<b>Office Hours</b>	Tuesdays 1-3PM and by appt.
<b>Class Time</b>	TuTh 9:35 - 10:55AM
<b>Class Location</b>	Lazenby Hall 001

---

**Description** Welcome! I'm very excited to do some philosophy with you all!

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of science. Philosophy of science has been around as long as philosophy and science have been around. We'll learn a little bit about the rich history of philosophy of science in this course. But our primary focus will be to introduce ourselves to the issues and debates within contemporary philosophy of science.

To that end, we will begin with what philosophers call the "puzzle of induction," before moving on to consider the question: "what is science?" This question of what science *is* is called the "demarcation problem" since answers to it propose to separate science from other things (like pseudoscience or non-scientific forms of inquiry). We'll then discuss scientific revolutions before turning to the famous debate between scientific realists and scientific anti-realists. This debate concerns whether we should believe that our best scientific theories are true (or close to true), or instead think those theories are just useful tools. We'll then think about the values people use in science, including the political and social values that influence science. We'll finish the course by discussing these questions: (i) can all the sciences can be unified with physics "at the bottom"? (ii) what makes for a good explanation? (iii) what is a law of nature? and (iv) why is mathematics so effective in science?

By the end of this course, students should be able to critically think, question, discuss, and write about the nature and methods of science.

**General Education Information** The Curriculum Committee of the College of Arts & Sciences requests that syllabi of all GE courses list the goals and learning objectives for the relevant category of the GEC.

The goals of the *Number, Nature, and Mind GE Theme* are:

1. Successful students will analyze the nature of mathematics and/or mathematical reasoning at a more advanced and in-depth level than in the Foundations component.
2. Successful students will integrate approaches to number, nature, and mind by making connections to their own experience of mathematical thinking and its application in the world, and by making connections to work they have done in previous classes and/or anticipate doing in the future.

3. Successful students will experience and examine mathematics as an abstract formal system accessible to mental manipulation and/or mathematics as a tool for describing and understanding the natural world.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:** Successful students are able to...

- Engage in critical and logical thinking about the nature and/or application of mathematical reasoning.
- Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the philosophical and/or cognitive foundations of mathematics and/or the application of mathematics in understanding the natural world.
- Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches to or experiences of the role of mathematics and mathematical reasoning in different academic and non-academic contexts.
- Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.
- Analyze and describe how mathematics functions as an idealized system that enables logical proof and/or as a tool for describing and understanding the natural world.

**Class Conduct** This class will be heavily discussion based. And we will sometimes discuss very sensitive political, moral, 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. 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 will be made available 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.

Please **contact me via email, *instead*** of via the Carmen messaging.

**Materials** There is no required textbook for this class. All of the assigned reading material will be available for free on Carmen.

**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):

- Participation and attendance (20%).
- Carmen discussions (10%).
- Initial reflection paper (5%).
- Midterm exam (25%).
- Final paper draft (10%).
- Final paper (25%).

- Final reflection (5%).

Detailed assignment sheets for the papers 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. The only opportunity for extra credit in this class will be a small one at the very end of the course.

### Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

There will be two **reflection papers**, one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. Your initial reflection paper will be a very short paper 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 at this point in the semester. You will compare this paper with your final reflection paper at the course's end so that you can see how much you have grown as a philosopher. These will be short, low-stakes assignments.

The **midterm exam** will be a cumulative exam on the various concepts we've learned over the semester. It will consist of multiple question types: multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blank, and short essay. More detail will follow as we approach the midterm.

The **Carmen discussion posts** will be discussion board posts on our Carmen page. I will open 10 discussion boards throughout the semester with an open discussion question related to that week's topics. You do not have to post all 10 weeks. But you do have to post at least 6 weeks. When you post, for full credit, you must post your initial answer to the discussion board question prompt, *and then also* respond to one of your classmate's posts. Your response must be substantial.

The **final paper** will be done in two parts. First you will submit a draft of your final paper to me a few weeks before the final paper is due. I will grade this draft and give you substantive feedback for you to revise your paper before submitting the final version. This way you can practice your writing in a lower-stakes context first, before moving on to submitting the higher value final submission. You will get detailed assignment sheets for this assignment.

**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 serious 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/>.

Do not use ChatGPT or similar software for your discussion posts or your papers.

**Religious Accommodations** It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief.

Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

**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](http://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](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at [go.osu.edu/wellnessapp](http://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.

### Week One

January 7th ..... Introduction  
 Read the Syllabus  
 January 9th ..... Introduction  
 Read the introduction to Dear's *The Intelligibility of Nature*.

### Week Two

January 14th ..... Induction

Read “Induction and inductivism” by Ladyman.

January 16th ..... Induction

Read pgs. 31-40 of Ladyman’s “The problem of induction and inductivism.”

### Week Three

January 21st ..... Induction

Read pgs. 40-61 of Ladyman’s “The problem of induction and inductivism.”

January 23rd ..... Demarcation & Falsification

Read pgs. 57-63 of Godfrey-Smith’s “Popper: Conjecture & Refutation.”

### Week Four

January 28th ..... Demarcation & Falsification

Read pgs. 63-74 of Godfrey-Smith’s “Popper: Conjecture & Refutation.”

January 30th ..... Kuhn & Scientific Revolutions

Read “Kuhn and Normal Science” by Godfrey-Smith.

### Week Five

February 4th ..... Kuhn & Scientific Revolutions

Read “Kuhn and Revolutions” by Godfrey-Smith.

February 6th ..... The Revolutions of Physics

Watch “The Scientific Revolution” and “Einstein’s Revolution” by CrashCourse.

### Week Six

February 11th ..... Scientific Realism

Read pgs. 129-146 of Ladyman’s “Scientific Realism.”

February 13th ..... Scientific Realism

Read pgs. 146-160 of Ladyman’s “Scientific Realism.”

### Week Seven

February 18th ..... Scientific Realism

Read pgs. 1-8 of Chakravartty’s “Scientific Realism.”

February 20th ..... Scientific Realism

Read pgs. 9-15 of Chakravartty’s “Scientific Realism.”

### Week Eight

February 25th ..... Midterm Week

Catch-up and review day.

February 27th ..... Midterm Week

Midterm exam in class.

### Week Nine

March 4th ..... Objectivity and Science as Social

Read “The Challenge from Sociology of Science” by Godfrey-Smith.

March 6th ..... Objectivity and Science as Social

Read “Values and Objectivity” pgs. 170-180 by Longino.

### Week Ten

**NO CLASS SPRING BREAK!**

### Week Eleven

March 18th ..... Objectivity and Science as Social  
 Read “Feminist Philosophy of Science: Values and Objectivity” by Crasnow.  
 March 20th ..... Explanation  
 Read “Explanation” by Godfrey-Smith.

### Week Twelve

March 25th ..... Unity of Science  
 Read pgs. 1-10 of “The Unity of Science” by Cat.  
 March 27th ..... Unity of Science  
 Read pgs. 22-26 of “The Unity of Science” by Cat.

### Week Thirteen

April 1st ..... Laws of Nature  
 Read “Laws of Nature” by Zerella and pgs. 1-7 of “Laws of Nature” by Carroll.  
 April 3rd ..... Laws of Nature  
 Read “Do the Laws of Physics State the Facts” by Cartwright.

### Week Fourteen

April 8th ..... Mathematics in the Sciences  
 Read “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences” by Wigner.  
 April 10th ..... Mathematics in the Sciences  
 Read pgs. 1-13 of Marcus’s “The Indispensability Argument in the Philosophy of Mathematics.”

### Week Fifteen

April 15th ..... Mathematics in the Sciences  
 No new reading.  
 April 17th ..... Final Day  
 No new reading.

### Important Assignment Dates (Also Tentative!)

Initial reflection paper ..... January 19th at 11:59pm  
 Midterm ..... February 27th in class  
 Final paper DRAFT ..... April 6th at 11:59pm  
 Final paper ..... April 23rd at 11:59pm  
 Final reflection ..... April 27th at 11:59pm

# PROPOSED SYLLABUS FOR HISTORY OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

---

<b>Instructor</b>	Jason DeWitt
<b>Office</b>	N/A
<b>Contact</b>	N/A
<b>Office Hours</b>	N/A
<b>Class Time</b>	N/A
<b>Class Location</b>	N/A

---

**Description** Welcome! I'm very excited to do philosophy with you all. This course is focused on the history of the philosophical movement known as "analytic philosophy." Analytic philosophy has dominated the world of English-speaking philosophy for over one hundred years. In this course, we will tell a story, simultaneously detailed and big-picture, about this fascinating and rich episode in the history of philosophy.

In the beginning, we will focus on the founders of analytic philosophy: figures like Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, and Susan Stebbing. We will then move into analytic philosophy's pioneering middle-years as we examine logical positivism and atomism, the twists and turns of Ludwig Wittgenstein's ever-changing philosophy, and the beginnings of a "post-positivistic" turn in the work of C.I. Lewis, Margaret McDonald, Gilbert Ryle, Rudolf Carnap, W.V.O. Quine, and Wilfrid Sellars. Then we will consider two moments in late twentieth-century analytic philosophy. The first is the work of Saul Kripke, Ruth Barcan Marcus, Hilary Putnam, and David Lewis in logic, language and metaphysics which, in many ways, made a more recent revival of metaphysics possible. The second is the "neopragmatism" or "post-analytic philosophy" associated with thinkers like Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty.

These last figures will allow us to conclude the course by considering the history of analytic philosophy in broad terms: where has analytic philosophy taken us and where is it going?

## General Education Information

### Class Conduct

### Materials

**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):

- Reflection papers (**20%**).
- Outside-the-canon research paper (**30%**).
- Final paper (**50%**).

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.

### Descriptions of Major Course Assignments

The **reflection papers** will be short papers (1-3 pages) in which you describe your reflections on that week's readings. You must do six reflection papers for full credit. What weeks you choose to complete your six reflections is up to you. If there are multiple readings assigned that week, you can write about either or both. The idea here is to practice forming paper ideas, so your reflection papers need to be substantive. Share your thoughts and your reasons for those thoughts. Mere summary or mere opinion-sharing will not be helpful. Hopefully, you can use one of your reflection papers as the beginnings of your final paper idea.

There will be an **outside-the-canon research paper** due around the midpoint of the semester. This assignment is a medium length (5-8 page) paper on an analytic philosopher who is not normally considered part of the standard analytic canon. A pre-approved list of philosophers will be made available with the assignment sheet, but you are welcome to choose someone not on the sheet if you clear it with me beforehand. The research paper should be about one-third biography of the philosopher that you choose, and two-thirds a critical exploration of one of the main ideas that philosopher is known for.

There will be a **final paper** on any topic of your choice that we have covered in class. I will have meetings with each of you to discuss proposed topics and I'm happy to look over drafts as long as they are sent before the end of week fourteen.

### Tentative Course Schedule

#### Week One

Introduction.

Excerpts from Frege's *Foundations of Arithmetic* (1884).

#### Week Two

Frege's "On Sense and Reference" (1892).

Russell's "On Denoting" (1905).

#### Week Three

Excerpts from Russell's *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (1918).

#### Week Four

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921).

#### Week Five

Moore's "A Defense of Common Sense" (1925).

Stebbing's "The Method of Analysis in Metaphysics" (1932).

#### Week Six

Excerpts from Lewis's *Mind and the World Order* (1928).

#### Week Seven

Excerpts from Carnap's *The Logical Structure of the World* (1928).

Carnap's "Pseudoproblems in Philosophy" (1928).

**Week Eight**

Excerpts from Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936).

**Week Nine**

MacDonald's "Induction and Hypothesis" (1937).

Excerpts from Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* (1949).

**Week Ten**

Carnap's "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" (1950).

Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951).

**Week Eleven**

Excerpts from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

**Week Twelve**

Excerpts from Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956).

**Week Thirteen**

Marcus's "Modalities and Intensional Languages" (1961).

Excerpts from Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (1970/1980).

**Week Fourteen**

Putnam's "The Meaning of Meaning" (1975).

Excerpts from Lewis's *On the Plurality of Worlds* (1986).

**Week Fifteen**

Rorty's "The World Well Lost" (1972).

Davidson's "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1973).