

PHIL 100 A02
CRN# 13743 + 23586

September-April 2021-2022
TWF: 11:30am – 12:20pm

Introduction to Philosophy

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10am-11am group hours + individual meetings by appointment

[online resources about.](#)

Course Description:

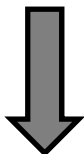
The aim of this course will be to introduce students to the most fundamental questions in Western philosophy. A mix of classic and contemporary readings will be used. We will work our way through the essential issues that have attracted attention from philosophers as old as Plato right up to those working in the field today. Careful examination of these issues will give students a sense of what philosophy in the Western tradition is about, and it will allow students to learn the more general (and exceedingly valuable!) skill of thinking critically about tough conceptual problems. Topics include: Can rational arguments be used to prove the existence of God? Do human beings have free will, or are our 'decisions' determined by purely physical forces? How can we be certain about what we think we know about the external world? Is there an objective basis for morality? The goal of the course will be to encourage students to develop informed opinions about these kinds of difficult questions.

Course Website: Online materials will be made available via Uvic Brightspace Access your customized Brightspace page by signing in to Uvic and clicking on Online Tools You should see Brightspace as an option.

Texts: Reason and Responsibility, 1st ed. by Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau
Writing Philosophy, 2nd ed. by Lewis Vaughn and Jillian Scott MacIntosh

The R&R textbook is expensive, but prior editions work reasonably well.

Requirements: Ten quote & comment assignments (1% each)
Two short writing assignments (5% each)
Two longer writing assignments (10% each)
Two midterm tests (10% each)
Two end of term online tests (20% each)



Note: Writing assignment due dates and midterm test dates are posted below in the weekly schedule. You are responsible for knowing these dates and plan ahead, and manage your overall personal workload accordingly.

Grading System

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90 – 100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior , shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85 – 89	A	8	
80 – 84	A-	7	
77 – 79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student’s full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73 – 76	B	5	
70 – 72	B-	4	
65 – 69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
60 – 64	C	2	

50 – 59 D 1 A D is earned by work the couradminim.5(sa4.2(selTJ/TT4 1 Tf3.885440 TD.001 TTc.0003

An Important Note on Diversity:

You may notice that in this course we will be reading an overwhelming majority of “dead white men”. You may wonder why this is the case. Why not read more women and non-European philosophers? This is an excellent question. Here are some initial answers:

1. This course introduces students to a particular thread of philosophical thought that is grounded in work from Ancient Greece and European enlightenment thinking, but it should not be viewed as the **only** valuable thread in the history of philosophy. It is a thread best studied comprehensively as a linked narrative, but it is one among many.
2. I obviously believe this thread of philosophical thought is worth studying, but I also encourage students to take courses at Uvic that explore alternative perspectives. For example, courses like **Gender Studies** (GNDR 100; Gender, Power and Difference) and **Indigenous Studies** (IS 101; Indigenous Foundations) would nicely complement our survey of Western philosophy.
3. The fact that there are so few women and persons of colour on our reading list is **not** because they are less philosophically capable than white men! It is because Western civilization has a long history of gender discrimination, racism, and colonialism that excluded women and persons of colour from the formal study of philosophy.
4. There is still much work to be done to make philosophy fully inclusive for members of disadvantaged groups, but remember that (despite our reading list) there are many distinguished philosophers today who are women, persons of colour, members of the LGBTQ community and disabled persons. Students who identify with these groups can take inspiration from the fact that these contemporary role models exist.

If you have further concerns about diversity in our course or suggestions for how it may be more effectively promoted, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Note: Dates and page numbers listed are subject to change, so regular class attendance is essential to stay informed about scheduling changes. Material should be read **before** the class in which it is discussed. Note that the page numbers assigned often refer to selected passages from longer chapters in the text.

RR page #'s refer to the 16th Edition of the, **Reason & Responsibility** textbook.

WP page #'s refer to the 2nd Edition of the **Writing Philosophy** textbook.

Other readings listed by author are available online via **Brightspace** Access these online readings well in advance to avoid last-minute technical problems.

Dates	Readings	FALL 2021
Sept. 8	First Meeting	
Sept. 10	René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy [RR 242 – 249]	
Sept. 14	René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy [RR 249 – 256]	
Sept. 15	Saja Parvizian: Al-Ghazali and Descartes on Defeating Skepticism [pdf]	
Sept. 17	René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy [RR 256 – 260]	
Sept. 21	Descartes & Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia: Letters [pdf]	
Sept. 22	G.E. Moore: Proof of an External World [RR 290 – 293] John Locke: The Causal Theory of Perception [RR 279 – 282]	
Sept. 24	John Locke: The Causal Theory of Perception [RR 274 – 279]	
Sept. 28	George Berkeley: Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous [pdf: 1 – 15, 24 – 26]	
Sept. 29	George Berkeley: Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous [pdf: 27 – 32, 38 – 39]	
Oct. 1	George Berkeley: Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous [pdf: 40 – 45] *** Writing Assignment #1 Due ***	
Oct. 5	David Hume: An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding [RR 293 – 302]	
Oct. 6	David Hume: An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding [RR 302 – 308]	
Oct. 8	Wesley C. Salmon: An Encounter with David Hume [RR 340 – 3406]	

Oct. 19	Deductive Arguments [WP chapter 2]
Oct. 20	More Deductive Arguments [WP chapter 2]
Oct. 22	Inductive Arguments [WP chapter 2]

Oct. 26 Anselm of Canterbury: The Ontological Argument [RR 31 – 33]
 Gaunilo of Marmoutiers: On Behalf of the Fool [RR 33 – 36]

Oct. 27

Oct. 29

Nov. 30	J.L. Mackie: Evil and Omnipotence[RR 118 – 126]
Dec. 1	Peter Van Inwagen: The Argument from Evil[RR 126 – 136]
Dec. 3	Review

*****Note:** There will be an **Online Exam in December*****
Details TBA

Schedule of Readings and Assignments Continued

Dates

Readings

WINTER 2022

Jan. 11	Frank Jackson: The Qualia Problem[RR 372 – 376]
Jan. 12	Brie Gertler: In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism[RR 359 – 372]
Jan. 14	David Papineau: The Case for Materialism[RR 376 – 382]
Jan. 18	William G. Lycan: Robots and Minds[RR 407 – 413]
Jan. 19	John R. Searle: Minds, Brains, and Programs[RR 400 – 407]
Jan. 21	Daniel C. Dennett: Imagining a Conscious Robot[.pdf]

Jan. 29

Online Teaching Information

This section of PHIL 100 will be taught online to promote accessibility for students who may have difficulty attending in person. Nevertheless, it is meant to be taken as a regular (synchronous) course if possible. Here are some details regarding how it will work:

Lecture Format

The lectures will occur in the regular time slot for the course (TWF: 11:30am – 12:20pm) via Zoom. However, to promote accessibility for students facing challenges like variable wifi availability, living in other time zones, losing access to daytime childcare, etc., I will record the lectures and make them available via Brightspace

If you can attend the lectures live via Zoom, then I strongly recommend doing so in order to allow for you to ask questions as we discuss the material. Online teaching has certain challenges and benefits, but my aim is to facilitate as much collaborative discussions there would be in an ordinary lecture. We will work out the relevant Zoom conventions for making this happen during the first week of class. However, if at any point you find that you face challenges to fully participating in the course please let me know so that we can try to work out a solution.

Online Testing

Midterm tests will be run online during regular class time (11:30am-12:20pm). If you are unable to write the midterm tests at that time, please contact me in advance to make other arrangements. End of term exams will be run online after classes are over at a time TBA by the Uvic Office of the Registrar.

Technical Support

Most technical difficulties are best answered by the Uvic [Computer Help Desk](#), but if you find yourself facing persistent technical difficulties, please get in contact with me so I can help in whatever way I can.

Intellectual Property of Course Materials

Note that all of the assignments, lectures and other materials posted to Brightspace are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. **Do not circulate this material** online without my permission. Posting course materials to secondary sites or otherwise circulating course materials online without the permission of your instructor violates the University of Victoria [Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Evidence of students circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

University Covid Policy + Updates

For general Uvic information about how the university is dealing with covid at this stage of the pandemic, see the [COVID-19 information page](#) for updates.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please read these over so you can anticipate common issues before it's too late.

Q: Do I really need to read the material assigned? It's very hard to understand.

A: Yes, make the effort. We can sort things out in class, but reading the material on your own (and then also coming to class) will help you to understand the content.

Q: Do I need to complete each of the course requirements to pass the course?

A: No, in this particular course (unlike some other courses at Uvic), I do not require each of the various tests/assignments to be completed for an overall pass. So, for example, if you are unable to complete a certain assignment you can still pass the course.

Q: I'm having a difficult week in terms of workload in my other courses and hours at my job (that I need to pay for school). Can I have an extension?

A: No. I genuinely sympathize with these requests, but I do not grant extensions based on workload rather than illness or family emergency so **please do not ask me this**. As stressful as workload issues are for students, I can't compare the workloads different students in the class might be facing without my knowledge. All I can do is give due dates well in advance and recommend that students plan accordingly.

Q: I'm over the word count. Does this really matter?

A: Would I include it in the instructions if it didn't? If you are only a few words over I won't give you a zero, but still: use the opportunity to work on editing your writing.

Q: Are you willing to look over drafts of our assignments?

A: I'm not against it in principle, but in a large class it's not always feasible. Still, if you finish early enough I'll do my best to make time. More often it's helpful to send me a provisional outline of your argument so that I can make suggestions.

Q: I didn't read the instructions for the Q&C Assignments. Now it's the last week of class. Can I hand in retroactive assignments on readings we already covered?

A: No. It defeats the point of the assignment. Read instructions. Read course outlines.

Q: I'm not feeling well, but *maybe* I'm ok to write the test. Should I just try and see what happens? I can always just quit and write it again later, right?

A: No. I respect students trying to tough things out, but think it over procedurally from the perspective of the university: it is 100% reasonable to delay a test due to student illness, but it is another thing entirely to let a student see the contents of that test and then take a second try at it. So if you think you might not be well enough to write an exam, then do not write that exam. Contact me instead.

Q: Is philosophy really that great? Will it really change the way I think?

A: Yes, it is. Yes, it will.