

Philosophy 1100 – Introduction to Philosophy

Course Syllabus, Summer 2023

Lecture-Style Course

Tu/Thr: 1:30p-3:05p, Journalism Bldg 375

May 9th to August 2nd

Instructor:

Jacob MacDavid (call me “Jacob.” No need for last names or titles.)

Pronouns: he, him, his

337E University Hall

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Office Hours: T/Thr 10a-11:00a, and by appt

Course Content: This course covers several philosophical topics at an introductory level. The main goal of the class is to develop the ability to analyze and respond to arguments. In other words, students will hone their ability to answer the questions: What reasons does a given person have for a given belief? What would be the best reasons to hold that belief? Are there reasons not to hold that belief? The secondary, but still important, goal of the class is to develop familiarity with a variety of philosophical topics.

We will spend some time on each of the main branches of philosophy. We will start with logic, to develop a philosophical toolkit for understanding and responding to arguments. Next is epistemology, the study of knowledge and justification. We move on to some metaphysics, particularly the questions of whether humans are free, and whether God exists. We move onto ethics, the study of the good life and the question of how to treat others. We end with some applied issues, such as whether we must give most of our money to charity.

Background. This is an introductory class. No prior experience in philosophy is necessary.

Reading Materials. Readings will be posted as PDFs on Carmen.

Graded Assignments. Students will be graded based on their performance in four categories: in-class participation, weekly reading responses, two papers, and two tests. More detailed rubrics for each will follow. Briefly:

- **In-Class Participation:** contribute to our community by contributing to discussion (asking questions, providing comments), while allowing space for others to speak
- **Weekly Reading Responses:** Each week, students will submit to Carmen a brief (1 paragraph) response to one of the week’s readings. The paragraph can be an objection, a summary of some part of the reading, or an explanation of why some part of the reading requires clarification
- **Papers:** Two term papers, each roughly 5 double-spaced pages, with prompts provided by the professor. You’ll receive more info on that when I hand out rubrics. Drafts are not required, but encouraged, and should be submitted a week prior to the paper due date.
- **Tests:** Two tests, in-person with pen and paper. Study guides will be distributed at least a week before each.

Grade Breakdown

10% In-Class Participation

14% Weekly Reading Responses

40% Papers (5% first draft, 10% comments and conferences, 25% final paper)

36% Tests (2 tests, 18% each)

Important Deadlines

- Weekly Reading Response: before class each Thursday
- Midterm 1: June 20th, Tuesday
- Paper Draft Due: June 29th, Thursday
- Peer Comments Due: July 5th, Wednesday
- Student Conference Day: July 6th, Thursday
- Final Draft Due: July 25th, Tuesday
- Midterm 2: August 2nd, Wednesday

Late Policy

Email Jacob if you believe you will need an extension on any assignment. For the first few, no explanation is required. If you require many extensions, Jacob will coordinate with you a new set of deadlines.

Course Expectations.

- **During Lectures:** Students are expected to complete the assigned reading before attending the lecture. Be sure to have a copy of the reading, either physical or digital
 - o **Electronics Policy:** Students are allowed to use laptops/smart pads to take notes and to access the readings. If electronic use becomes distracting, Jacob reserves the right to deny electronic privileges.
- **Attendance/Participation:** There is no explicit attendance policy, but contributing to our intellectual community by asking/answering questions and providing your thoughts on the readings is 10% of your grade. Twice during the semester, you will be updated about your current participation score.
- **Communicating with instructor outside of class.** Email is the best way to reach me. You can also visit me during scheduled office hours, and before and after class in the classroom.

General Education Category: GE: Cultures and Ideas; and Historical and Cultural Studies Foundation

- **Goal:** Successful students will evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas to develop capacities for aesthetic and cultural response, judgment, interpretation and evaluation.
- **Learning Outcomes:**
 - o 1.1B Analyze and interpret selected major forms of human thought, culture, ideas or expression.
 - o 1.2B 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.
 - o 1.3B 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.
 - o 1.4B Evaluate social and ethical implications in cultural studies.

- This course achieves its goals and learning outcomes primarily by analyzing important philosophical texts from the history of Philosophy, such as David Hume and Plato, and from contemporary voices, such as Linda Zagzebski and Susan Wolf. The logic unit covers various philosophical methodologies, such as deductive and abductive inference. Students interpret the readings with these various lenses. Secondary sources, such as class discussion and the students' personal experience, inform their work, which includes an essay, two midterms, and weekly reading responses. The course philosophically investigates the value and nature of knowledge, the question of whether humans have free will, and how much we owe to each other.

Statement of Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish 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. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

University Statement on Disability Services

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. 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.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: What Is Philosophy? Why Do Philosophy?

Tues May 9th. *What Is Philosophy?*

- Nothing to do before class

Thurs May 11th. *What's Valuable about Philosophy? Plus: When (and How) to Break the Law*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Meena Krishnamurthy, "MLK Jr. on Democratic Propaganda, Shame, and Moral Transformation" (2 pgs)

- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (8 pgs)
- Plato, "Crito" (6 pgs) [16 pgs total]

Week 2: Logic and Critical Thinking

Tues May 16th. *How to Reason Critically: Deductive, Inductive, Abductive*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- John Perry, John Martin Fischer, & Michael Bratman, "Logical Toolkit" (6 pgs) IP
- Steven M. Cahn, Patricia Kitcher, & George Sher, "The Elements of Argument" (9 pgs) EP [15 pgs total]

Thurs May 18th. *Virtues and Vices of Reasoning: Deductive, Inductive, Abductive*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- "Quick Logic Handout" (7 pgs) [7 pgs total]

Week 3: Epistemology: The Value of Knowledge

Tues May 23rd. *Knowledge and its Value*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- A.J. Ayer, "What Is Knowledge?" (3 pgs) EP
- W.K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (8 pgs) PR
- Linda Zagzebski, "Caring and Epistemic Demands" (4 pgs) EP [15 pgs total]

Thurs May 25th. *Practical Belief'*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- William James, "The Will to Believe." PR (18 pgs) [18 pgs total]

Week 4: Metaphysics: God's Existence

Tues May 30th. *Arguments for God's Existence*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Anselm and Gaunilo, "The Ontological Argument." (5 pgs) EP
- Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae" (3 pgs) EP [8 pgs total]

Thurs June 1st. *The Problem of Evil*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- David Hume, "The Argument from Evil" (11 pgs) PR
- Marilyn McCord Adams "The Problem of Hell" (3 pgs) PR [14 pgs total]

Week 5: Metaphysics: Free Will

Tues June 6th. *Determinism and Free Will*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Thomas Nagel, "Free Will" (6 pgs) EP
- W.T. Stace, "Free Will and Determinism" (3 pgs) EP
- Steven M. Cahn, "Freedom or Determinism?" (10 pgs) EP
- Harry Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (2 pgs) [21 pgs total]

Thurs June 8th. *Freedom and Desire*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" (16 pgs) [16 pgs total]

Week 6: Metaphysics: Free Will

Tues June 13th. *Value and Motivation*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Gary Watson, "Free Agency" (16 pgs) [16 pgs total]

Thurs June 15th *Sanity and Freedom*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" (16 pgs) [16 pgs total]

Week 7: Midterm 1 & Metaphysics: Free Will

Tues June 20th. Midterm 1

- Midterm 1

Thurs June 22nd. *Play and the Meaning of Life*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Mortiz Schlick, "On the Meaning of Life" (10 pgs)

Week 8: Ethics: The Meaning of Life & [Paper Draft Due](#)

Tues June 27th. *Is Life Absurd?*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd" (12 pgs) [12 pgs total]

Thurs June 29th. *Student Conferences*

- [Draft Due](#)
- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Richard Taylor, "The Meaning of Life" (10 pgs) EP
- Susan Wolf, "Meaning in Life" (4 pgs) EP
- Christine Vitrano, "Meaningful Lives" (3 pgs) EP [17 pgs total]

Week 9: [Student Conferences](#)

Tues July 4th. *No Class*

Thurs July 6th. *Student Conferences*

- [Student Conferences](#)

Week 10: Ethics: God and Morality, and Consequentialism

Tues July 11th. *God and Morality*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Plato, "Euthyphro" (14 pgs) [14 pgs total]

Thurs July 13th. *Maximizing Happiness*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- John Stuart Mill, selections from *Utilitarianism* (6 pgs)
- Louis Pojman, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism" (9 pgs) [15 pgs total]

Week 11: Ethics: Deontology & Applied Ethics

Tues July 18th. *Treating Humans with Respect*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Onora, O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics" (10 pgs) [10 pgs total]

Thurs July 20th. *How Much Do We Need to Give?*

- **Readings (Read Before Class)**
- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (8 pgs)
- Travis Timmerman, "A Reply to Singer" (4 pgs) [12 pgs total]

Week 12: Flex Day, **Final Draft** and Review

Tues July 25th. *Flex Day*

- **Final Draft Due**

Thurs July 27th *Review*

Week 13: **Final Exam**

Wed August 2nd *Final Exam*

- **Final Exam**, 2:00p-3:45p