

Introduction to Philosophy

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Office Hours: T&W 11:35 am—12:05 pm in person
Th 8:00 am—8:50 am on Zoom



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Course Description

The aim of this course is to get you involved in the activity of philosophy. We will spend our time thinking about some of life's big questions, working to understand how some great thinkers have tried to answer them and critically examining our own answers to them. What is the nature of reality? Is it something we can have knowledge of? Does God exist? Can we justify our beliefs? What are minds? What is consciousness? What makes something morally right or wrong? How ought we to live? What (if anything) makes it true that you are the same person today that you were yesterday? Do human beings have free will? What makes a life meaningful? Is life absurd?

We will approach all of these questions philosophically. That means we will remain open to reason, articulating the questions and the answers as clearly and carefully as we can and critically assessing the answers we have with an eye to finding more satisfying responses.

Texts

You will need these books:

For both
terms

Stephen Stich and Tom Donaldson. **Philosophy: Asking Questions—Seeking Answers**. Oxford University Press. 2019. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through RedShelf (redshelf.com).

Anthony Falikowski and Susan Mills. **Experiencing Philosophy**. Second Edition. Broadview Press. 2023. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through RedShelf (redshelf.com).

For the
first term

John Perry. **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**. Hackett Publishing. 1978. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through RedShelf (redshelf.com). Free on Internet Archive (archive.org).

For the
second term

Daniel C. Dennett. **Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting**. MIT Press. 2015. Available through the UVic Bookstore and Kobo (kobo.com) and Amazon. Free online through UVic Library.

All the other readings will be available on-line through the course Brightspace page.

Brightspace

To access the course materials on Brightspace go to bright.uvic.ca and log in with your regular Netlink ID. If you have difficulty accessing Brightspace or if a link to a particular reading is malfunctioning, please let me know by email right away so that I can take care of the problem.

The Brightspace page contains all sorts of information you will need for the course. It contains links to many of the course readings, details about how much of particular texts you need to read, a calendar of course events, a class list with email links, your grades and various supplementary materials. It is also where you will find the writing assignments and quizzes.

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Course Work

First Term

Four Quizzes 3, 3, 3, & 5%

Five Writing Assignments

Second Term

Four Quizzes 4% each

Five Writing Assignments

Your lowest writing assignment grade for the year will automatically be dropped.
The 9 remaining writing assignments will count for 70% of the course grade.

Writing Assignments

Each writing assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to engage with the course material while developing particular philosophical skills. For each one we will have an in-class workshop to prepare you to tackle the assignment.

	Topic	Philosophical Work
WA 1 9/13	The Good Life: Does Epicurus have the cure for what ails you?	Apply a theory to a particular case and evaluate its success
WA 2 10/2	Personal Identity: I am not this body.	Identify an argument; check for validity and soundness
WA 3 10/30	Ethics: Of course it would be wrong, but why?	Apply two theories to a case and compare their success
WA 4 11/22	Perception: But I'm looking right at it.	Use an example to support an argument
WA 5 12/4	Knowledge and Reality: Does anyone know if there's a tree in the quad?	Do a comparative evaluation of theories
WA 6 TBA	Philosophy of Religion: Can you believe it?	Explain the debate between two philosophers with divergent criteria
WA 7 2/4	Scientific Method: Is it <i>all</i> pseudoscience?	Consider further implications of a theory
WA 8 2/12	Free Will and Control: Get control of yourself!	Develop an argument by analogy; consider an objection
WA 9 3/12	Minds and Machines: What do I have to do to convince you?	Evaluate the success of an objection
WA 10 4/4	Existential Crisis: Face the Question	Do a comparative evaluation of practical advice

These writing assignments are very short papers (ranging from 250 to 700 words). Specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on the course Brightspace page. It is very important to read and follow those instructions. *Each assignment will have specific criteria which must be met in order to receive credit.*

It is best to do the writing assignments on the basis of your own reading of the text and our class discussion of related ideas. If you choose to consult any other sources and use any quotations, phrases *or ideas* that you did not come up with on your own, you *must* cite your sources. See the note on **Academic Integrity** below.

Help with Writing Assignments

Before each writing assignment we will have a workshop day in class where we get you started on the assignment. For more help you can come to my regular office hours. In addition, the TAs will each have an office hour before each writing assignment to help you make sure that you are on the right track. Times and places for those office hours will be posted on the Brightspace calendar.

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Submitting Writing Assignments

Your writing assignments must be submitted on-line through Brightspace. Specific instructions and times submissions are due are posted on Brightspace along with the detailed descriptions of the assignments.

Unexcused late submissions will immediately lose 5% and will lose an additional 5% every 24 hours. If you are submitting your assignment late and the lateness was unavoidable, let me know so that we can waive the late penalty.

Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice, short answer and fill in the blank quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. Each quiz will be available on Brightspace only during our regular class time on the dates indicated in the schedule below. We will not have a class meeting on quiz days.

Information about what to expect on individual quizzes will be posted on Brightspace. If you miss a quiz due to illness or exceptional circumstance contact me immediately to schedule a make-up quiz.

Grading

Grades for the course will be assigned using the UVIC Undergraduate Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade
90 - 100	A+
85 - 89	A
80 - 84	A-
77 - 79	B+
73 - 76	B
70 - 72	B-
65 - 69	C+
60 - 64	C
50 - 59	D
Below 50	N or F

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.

B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates **good** comprehension of the course material, good command of the skills needed to work with it, and full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application.

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.

D is earned by work that indicates **minimal** command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

N indicates that the course requirements were not completed.

Academic Integrity

The University Policy on Academic Integrity (covering plagiarism, multiple submission, unauthorized use of an editor, falsifying materials, cheating and aiding others to cheat) will be enforced in this course. **You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the policy.** You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/students/academics/academic-integrity/>

If you have any doubts about what this policy requires or any questions about whether or not you are complying with it, please don't hesitate to ask me about it.

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Course Schedule

“S&D” stands for Stich and Donaldson’s *Philosophy: Asking Questions—Seeking Answers*.

“EP” stands for *Experiencing Philosophy* by Falikowski and Mills

Readings with no source indicated can be found through the Brightspace page.

First Term

Introduction

W 9/4 S&D Chapter 1: *What is philosophy?*

The Good Life

F 9/6 EP 3.4 *Hedonism: Pleasure is the Measure*

T 9/10 Workshop for Writing Assignment One

W 9/11 EP 3.1 *Stoicism: A Prescription for Peace of Mind*

F 9/13 **Writing Assignment One Due**

EP 3.5 *Buddhism as a Philosophy of Life*

T 9/17 Dreyfus *Nihilism on the Information Highway: Anonymity vs. Commitment in the Present Age*

Logic

W 9/18 S&D Chapter 2: *What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?*
Sections 1–4

F 9/20 EP 2.2 *Deductive Arguments*

T 9/24 S&D Chapter 2: *What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?*
Sections 6–8

Searching for the Self

W 9/25 Perry *A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, The First Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Sections 1–3

F 9/27 Workshop for Writing Assignment Two

T 10/1 Quiz 1 Logic

W 10/2 **Writing Assignment Two Due**

Perry *A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, The Second Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Section 4

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Searching for the Self *continued*

- F 10/4 Pery **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**, *The Third Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Section 5
Velleman *So It Goes* *recommended*

Ethics

- T 10/8 EP 5.4 *Immanuel Kant's Deontological Ethics*, pp. 365-374
Kant **Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals**, Section One,
recommended
- W 10/9 Quiz 2 Personal Identity
- F 10/11 *continued*
- T 10/15 S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Sections 1–3
Mill **Utilitarianism**, Chapter Two, *recommended*
- W 10/16 *continued*
- F 10/18 S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Section 6
The Trolley Problem (video)
- T 10/22 S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II)
- W 10/23 Workshop for Writing Assignment Three
- F 10/25 What should we do? *continued*
- T 10/29 Quiz 3 Ethics and the Good Life

Knowledge and Reality

- W 10/30 Writing Assignment Three Due
Plato Meno
- F 11/1 *continued*
- T 11/5 Plato **Phaedo**
EP 4.2 *Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology*
- W 11/6 Descartes **Meditations on First Philosophy**, Meditation One
S&D Chapter 5: *Can we be completely certain about anything?*, Sections 1&2
- F 11/8 Descartes **Meditations on First Philosophy**, Meditation Two
S&D Chapter 5: *Can we be completely certain about anything?*, Sections 3&4

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Reading Break 11/11 – 11/13 No Classes

Knowledge and Reality <i>continued</i>	
F 11/15	S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> , Sections 5–9
T 11/19	Russell <i>Appearance and Reality, The Existence of Matter</i>
W 11/20	Workshop for Writing Assignment Four
F 11/22	Writing Assignment Four Due
	S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 1–3 EP 4.4 <i>Locke's empiricist Theory of Ideas</i> Locke An Essay Concerning Human Understanding , Book II, Chapter viii, <i>recommended</i>
T 11/26	Berkeley Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous , First Dialogue S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 4 & 5
W 11/27	<i>continued</i>
F 11/29	Workshop for Writing Assignment Five
T 12/3	Quiz 4 Knowledge and Reality
W 12/4	Writing Assignment Five Due

Territory Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Equity

Uvic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN>. If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.

Religious Accommodation

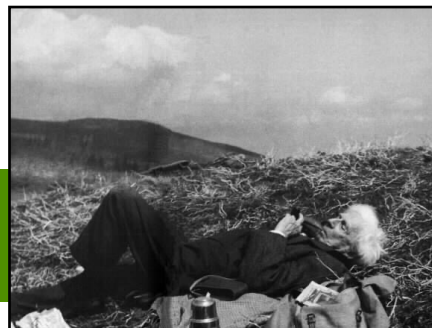
Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/r1q0gofdN?bc=true&bcCurrent=10%20-%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Observance&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemtype=policies>

Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html>). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

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Spring Semester



Spring Semester Schedule

Philosophy of Religion and the Ethics of Belief

T 1/7	Hume <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Parts I and II, EP 2.3 Non-Deductive Arguments
W 1/8	Hume <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Parts III through IX S&D Chapter 3: <i>Does God exist?</i> Sections 1–6
F 1/10	<i>continued</i>
T 1/14	Hume <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Parts X through XII S&D Chapter 4: <i>Why does God leave us to suffer?</i>
W 1/15	Clifford <i>The Ethics of Belief</i> James <i>The Will to Believe</i> S&D Chapter 3: <i>Does God exist?</i> Section 9
F 1/17	Workshop for Writing Assignment 6: <i>Can You Believe It?</i>

Philosophy of Science

T 1/21	S&D Chapter 7: <i>Will the sun rise tomorrow?</i> Sections 1–3
W 1/22	Writing Assignment 6: <i>Can You Believe It?</i> due 8pm S&D Chapter 7: <i>Will the sun rise tomorrow?</i> Sections 4 and 7 Gould <i>The Chain of Reason vs. the Chain of Thumbs</i> Pigliucci and Boudry <i>The Dangers of Pseudoscience</i>
F 1/24	Dicken Competing Paradigms: On “The Last Writings of Thomas S. Kuhn”
T 1/28	Workshop for Writing Assignment 7: <i>Is it All Pseudoscience?</i>
W 1/29	QUIZ 5 Science and Religion <i>open from 9:30 am to 11:30 am</i>

Free Will

F 1/31	Introduction to Free Will
T 2/4	Writing Assignment 7: <i>Is it All Pseudoscience?</i> due 8pm Dennett <i>Please Don't Feed the Bugbears</i>
W 2/5	Dennett <i>Making Reason Practical, Control and Self-Control</i>
F 2/7	Workshop for Writing Assignment 8: <i>Get Control of Yourself!</i>
T 2/11	Dennett <i>Self-Made Selves, Acting Under the Idea of Freedom</i>
W 2/12	Writing Assignment 8: <i>Get Control of Yourself!</i> due 8pm Dennett <i>"Could Have Done Otherwise", Why do we want free will?</i>
F 2/14	QUIZ 6 Free Will <i>open from 9:30 am to 11:30 am</i>

2/17 – 2/21 Reading Break – No Classes

Philosophy of Mind

T 2/25	S&D Chapter 10: <i>How is your mind related to your body?</i> , Sections 1 & 2
W 2/26	Ryle from The Concept of Mind S&D Chapter 10: <i>How is your mind related to your body?</i> , Section 3
F 2/28	S&D Chapter 10: <i>How is your mind related to your body?</i> , Section 4–6
T 3/4	Workshop for Writing Assignment 9: <i>What do I have to do to Convince You?</i> Turing from <i>Computing Machinery and Intelligence</i>
W 3/5	Searle <i>Watson Doesn't Know It Won on "Jeopardy!"</i>
F 3/7	Von Maur
T 3/11	Nagel <i>What is it like to be a bat?</i>
W 3/12	Writing Assignment 9: <i>What do I have to do to Convince You?</i> due 8pm Churchland <i>The Hornswoggle Problem</i>
F 3/14	Quiz 7 Mind <i>open from 9:30 am to 11:30 am</i>

The Good Life and the Meaning of Life

T 3/18 Tolstoy from *My Confession*

W 3/19 Schopenhauer *On The Vanity of Existence*

F 3/21 Camus from *The Myth of Sisyphus*

T 3/25 EP 3.2 *Existentialism: Born Free, Let Me Be*

W 3/26 Nagel *The Absurd*

F 3/28 EP 3.3 *The Meaning of Life*
Wolf *Happiness and Meaning*, Section II *Meaning in Life*, recommended

T 4/1 **Quiz 8 The Meaning of Life** *open from 9:30 am to 11:30 am*

W4/2 Workshop for Writing Assignment 10: *The Question*

Wallace *This is Water*

Russell *The Value of Philosophy*

F 4/4 Writing Assignment 10: *Face the Question* due 8pm

For all other course information see the course outline from the fall semester, available on Brightspace.