

PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy

Mondays & Thursdays 4:30-5:50
Bob Wright Centre (BWC) – FALL TERM
Engineering & Computer Science (ECS) – WINTER TERM

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Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays 1:30-2:30 (or by appointment)

Course Description

'The experience that most of all characterizes the philosopher is *wondering*: this is where philosophy begins, and nowhere else.' – Plato

All philosophy, literally translated from the Greek as 'love of wisdom' [*philo* + *sophia*], begins in wondering:

- * Are there rational grounds for believing that there is a God and if so, what is her nature?
- * What is it to know something, and how can I ever be certain that I know anything at all?
- * Is what I call my 'mind' nothing more than the electro-chemical processes that take place in my brain?
- * How do I know that other people have minds, and if I do, can I know what they are like?
- * If all action in the world is the effect of prior causes, why do I think that my actions are free?
- * What makes my actions right or wrong?
- * Are there certain absolute principles that I should always act in accordance with, or can I/should I make exceptions in certain cases?
- * What is 'justice' in the organization of a political community, and how do we go about arriving at a more just community?

These questions, and a seemingly infinite set of other questions about ourselves and the universe that we inhabit, set the philosopher's mind afire and prompts her to pursue answers through the use of sound reason and argumentation.

Over the course of the coming year, we will be exploring some of these questions, drawing on sources from both the history of philosophy as well as from contemporary works of philosophy. Our approach to this material will involve careful reading, with a focus on examining the issues and arguments critically and methodically.

This course has two main goals: first, it is meant to introduce you to the major questions, controversies and thinkers in philosophy; and second, it is meant present to you the methods of critical reasoning that will provide the basis for your analysis of various philosophical issues and arguments.

Readings:

Required Text – *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. Seventh edition. eds. John Perry, Michael Bratman & John Martin Fischer

* Please note, this text has been issued in multiple editions, and thus it has been substantially revised. You may opt to purchase a new copy of the most current edition, available at the University Bookstore; however, if you are able to, you may purchase a used copy of the earlier *sixth* edition. Please note that earlier editions have different pagination, and any edition older than the sixth may not contain all the reading.

Additional Readings – Some readings, not found in the required text for the course, will be posted on the course web-site (Course Spaces), accessible through UVic's 'My Page'

Evaluation:

Participation = 10%

Your participation grade for the course will be based on the following criteria:

1. *Regular attendance at lecture.* You are expected to attend all lectures. Absence from lecture requires an explanation. I will randomly be taking attendance throughout the year.
2. *Participation in class discussion.* You are expected to have done each reading *prior to the lecture*, and be prepared to discuss the material in class discussion. You may also avail yourself of office hours to discuss material with me in greater detail, or offer postings on the Course Spaces Discussion Forum

* *Note*, the readings that we will be taking up in class contain complex ideas and nuanced arguments. As such, you are strongly advised to give yourself plenty of time to read the material carefully. As a rule, it's *strongly advised* that you read each assignment *at least twice*.

Short Essays = 30%

You will write **two** short argumentative essays (one in each term), of approximately 4-5 pages. The argumentative essays will ask that you take a philosophical position on a set issue and argue for it. The essay topics and further instructions will be provided in a timely manner during the term. **Late essays will be penalized at 3% per day.**

Tests = 60%

You will write **four** in class tests (two in each term). The tests will require you to write short answer and short essay responses to set questions. The tests are designed to assess your familiarity with the readings and your comprehension of the ideas and arguments discussed in class. Each test is worth **15%** of your final grade, for a total of 60%.

* *Note*, missed tests will require medical documentation. Make-up tests will only be scheduled if medical documentation is provided.

Dates for Tests and Essays:

Date	Assignment
Thur. Oct. 12	Test 1
Mon. Nov. 13	Essay 1
Thur. Nov. 30	Test 2
Thur. Feb. 8	Test 3
Mon. Mar. 12	Essay 2
Thur. Apr. 5	Test 4

Grading Scale:

GRADE	PERCENTAGE	DESCRIPTION
A+	90-100	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.
A	85-89	
A-	80-84	
B+	77-79	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.
B	73-76	
B-	70-72	
C+	65-69	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.
C	60-64	
D	50-59	A 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.
F	0-49	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Academic Integrity:

'Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community.'

For the full statement of the University's Policy on Academic Integrity, including definitions of the violations of the policy, the procedures for dealing with such violations and the possible penalties that might be administered, please consult the Undergraduate Programs Calendar.

Diversity Statement:

UVic is committed to equity, diversity, social justice and fostering a welcoming and diverse learning, teaching and working environment. These are essential elements in achieving excellence in research and education. As members of a diverse and dynamic learning community, we each have a role to play in creating safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy learning environments that foster mutual respect and civility, and that recognize that people are our primary strength.

Accessibility Statement:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability (RCSD) as soon as possible. The RCSD staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations <http://rcsd.uvic.ca/>. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

UVic: Important Dates:	
Tues. Sept. 5	Last day for 100% reduction of tuition fees for first term and full-year courses. 50% of tuition fees assessed for courses dropped after this date
Fri. Sept. 22	Last day for adding courses for first-term and full-year courses
Mon. Oct. 9	Thanksgiving Day – No classes
Oct. 10	Last day for 50% reduction of tuition fees for standard courses. 100% of tuition fees will be assessed for courses dropped after this date
Mon.-Wed. Nov. 13-15	Reading Break – No classes
Fri. Dec. 1	Last day of classes
Wed. Jan. 3	Second term classes begin
Mon.-Fri. Feb, 12-16	Reading Break – No classes
Feb. 28	Last day for withdrawing from full year courses without penalty of failure
Fri. Apr. 6	Last day of classes

Schedule of Readings:

PART I - INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY		
Unit 1	Welcome to Philosophy!	Introduction to First Term: Syllabus – no reading
Unit 2	What is Philosophy?	'Philosophy: Introduction pp. 1-7 'Logical Toolkit' pp. 8-13
Unit 3	Meet a Philosopher!	Plato, 'Apology: Defence of Socrates' pp. 21-36
PART II - PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION		
Does God exist, and if so, are there valid arguments that prove his existence? It is argued that God's nature is such that he is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all seeing) and omnibenevolent (all good); but, if this is the case, how can there be evil in the world?		
Unit 1	Does God Exist?	Saint Anselm, 'The Ontological Argument' pp. 40-42 Saint Thomas Aquinas, 'The Existence of God' pp.42-44 William Paley, 'Natural Theology' pp. 45-49
Unit 2	Doesn't God Exist?	Bertrand Russell, 'Why I Am Not a Christian' (Course Spaces)
Unit 3	What's God Like?	David Hume, 'Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion' pp. 54-88
PART III - KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY (EPISTEMOLOGY)		
What is knowledge, and is it possible for us to justifiably claim that we have knowledge of the external world, or anything at all for that matter? Most, if not all, knowledge comes to us through experience (i.e., it is inductive). Is experience or induction sufficient for us to claim to have knowledge? Finally, what is it for something to be true?		
Unit 1	What is it to Know Something?	Edmund Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' (Course Spaces)
Unit 2	Do you Know Anything?	René Descartes, 'Meditations on First Philosophy' pp. 157-181
Unit 3	What is it for Something to be True?	Bertrand Russell, 'Truth and Falsehood' (Course Spaces) Brand Blanshard, 'Coherence as the Nature of Truth' (Course Spaces)

PART IV – MINDS, BODIES AND PERSONS		
<p>What is the nature of mind? Is it something material, and if so, how do we come to know anything about it? Is it something immaterial, and if so, can we know the mind through the physical sciences? Do we know that other people have minds or consciousness akin to our own, and if so how?</p>		
Unit 1	What is the Mind?	David M. Armstrong, 'The Nature of Mind' pp. 279-286
Unit 2	The Brain?	Paul M. Churchland, 'Eliminative Materialism' pp. 287-291
Unit 3	Something More...?	Thomas Nagel, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?' (Course Spaces)
PART V – ETHICS & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY		
<p>How do we decide that an action is morally right or morally wrong? Do we look only to the consequences of an action, or is there something more at stake in our deliberations? If so, what might that be? Do we all think in the same ways when we deliberate on questions of morality? Are our moral judgments all just relative to our own particular circumstances, or are there such things as objective moral judgments? Can we ever be moral without at the same time thinking about how we are advantaged as a result thereof? What is justice, and how does (or ought) justice determine how we act towards others?</p>		
Unit 1	What's Good and What's Bad?	Introduction to Value Theory – no reading
Unit 2	Are you Free?	Theodore Sider, 'Free Will and Determinism' (Course Spaces)
Unit 3	The Good = Good Consequences?	John Stuart Mill, 'Utilitarianism' pp. 483-499
Unit 4	Your Moral Integrity?	Bernard Williams, 'Utilitarianism and Integrity' pp. 510-518
Unit 5	The Good = Duty?	Immanuel Kant, 'Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals' pp. 527-543
Unit 6	The Good = Virtue?	Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics' pp. 568-583
Unit 7	The Good = Care?	Virginia Held, 'The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory' (Course Spaces)
Unit 8	Justice as Fairness?	John Rawls, 'A Theory of Justice' pp. 595-608
Unit 9	Justice as the Minimal State?	Robert Nozick, 'Justice and Entitlement' pp. 608-616
Unit 10	Designing the Polis?	Plato, The Republic pp. 728-734

Note: This schedule is tentative and subject to change.