

Introduction to Philosophy



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Office Hours: W 2:30-3:30, TH 9:00-10:00

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:

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|---------------------|---|
| 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). |
| 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). |
| 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. |

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.

Please add a photo of yourself to your Brightspace profile. This is not required, but in a large class it is very helpful.

Any changes that need to be made to the course schedule during the term will appear on the Brightspace page.

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Course Work

First Term

Four Quizzes 3, 3, 3, & 5%
Five Writing Assignments 7% each

Second Term

Four Quizzes 4% each
Five Writing Assignments 7% each

Your lowest writing assignment grade for the year will automatically be dropped.

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 9/21 | The Good Life | Apply a theory to a particular case and evaluate its success | |
| WA 2 10/12 | Ethics | Apply two theories to a case and compare their success | |
| WA 3 10/22 | Personal Identity | Identify an argument; check for validity and soundness | |
| WA 4 11/24 | Perception | Use an example to support an argument | |
| WA 5 12/7 | Knowledge and Reality | Do a comparative evaluation of theories | |
| 2nd term dates TBA | WA 6 | Free Will and Control | Develop an argument by analogy; consider an objection |
| | WA 7 | Evidence and Belief | Explain the debate between two philosophers with divergent criteria |
| | WA 8 | Scientific Method | Consider further implications of a theory |
| | WA 9 | Minds and Machines | Evaluate the success of an objection |
| | WA 10 | Existential Crisis | 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 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.

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.

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Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice and fill in the blank quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. Each quiz will be available on Brightspace for 8 hours. So you can choose when in that 8 hour window you want to take it. But once you open the quiz you will have only 30 minutes to submit your answers. 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/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policies?expanded=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations>

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

Any changes to this schedule will be posted on the Brightspace page.

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

Readings not in S&D or in the texts by Dennett and Perry can be found through the Brightspace page.

First Term

Introduction

W 9/8 S&D Chapter 1: *What is philosophy?*

Ethics and the Good Life

F 9/10 Introduction to Ethics

T 9/14 Epicurus *Letter to Menoecus*
S&D Chapter 13: *What really matters?*, Sections 1 & 2

W 9/15 Workshop for Writing Assignment One

F 9/17 S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Sections 4 & 5
Kant **Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals**, Section One

T 9/21 **Writing Assignment One Due**
continued

W 9/22 S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Sections 1–3
Mill from **Utilitarianism**, Chapter Two

F 9/24 *continued*

T 9/28 S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Section 6
The Trolley Problem (video)

W 9/29 S&D Chapter 12: Are there objective truths about right and wrong?, Sections 1, 2 & 4
Saul *Feminism and Respect for Cultures*

F 10/1 S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Sections 1 & 2 (duty to aid)

T 10/5 S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Section 3 (eating meat)

W 10/6 **Quiz 1 Ethics**
S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Section 4 (abortion)

F 10/8 Workshop for Writing Assignment Two

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Logic

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|---------|--|
| T 10/12 | Writing Assignment Two Due S&D Chapter 2: <i>What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?</i> |
| W 10/13 | <i>continued</i> |
| F 10/15 | <i>continued</i> |

Searching for the Self

| | |
|---------|--|
| T 10/19 | Perry A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, <i>The First Night</i> S&D Chapter 11: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?</i> Sections 1–3 |
| W 10/20 | <i>Workshop for Writing Assignment Three</i> |
| F 10/22 | Writing Assignment Three Due Perry A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, <i>The Second Night</i> S&D Chapter 11: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?</i> Section 4 |
| T 10/26 | Quiz 2 Logic Perry A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, <i>The Third Night</i> S&D Chapter 11: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?</i> Section 5 |
| W 10/27 | Velleman <i>So It Goes</i> |

Knowledge and Reality

| | |
|---|---|
| F 10/29 | Plato Meno |
| T 11/2 | Quiz 3 Personal Identity Meno <i>continued</i> |
| W 11/3 | Plato Phaedo Russell <i>The World of Universals</i> |
| F 11/5 | Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy , Meditation One S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> , Section 1 |
| T 11/9 | Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy , Meditation Two S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> , Sections 2–4 |
| Reading Break 11/10 – 11/12 No Classes | |
| T 11/16 | <i>continued</i> |
| W 11/17 | Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy , Meditations Three through Six S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> , Sections 5–9 |

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Knowledge and Reality *continued*

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|---------|---|
| F 11/19 | <i>continued</i> Workshop for Writing Assignment Four |
| T 11/23 | Locke from An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Russell <i>Appearance and Reality, The Existence of Matter</i> |
| W 11/24 | Writing Assignment Four Due S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 1—3 |
| F 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 |
| T 11/30 | Berkeley Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous , Third Dialogue |
| W 12/1 | Quiz 4 Knowledge and Reality S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 6—7 |
| F 12/3 | Workshop for Writing Assignment Five (Last day of class for this term!) |
| T 12/7 | Writing Assignment Five Due |

Second Term Topics (Schedule TBA)

Free Will
Philosophy of Religion and the Ethics of Belief
Philosophy of Science
Philosophy of Mind
The Good Life and the Meaning of Life

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&bcltemType=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.