

PHI 100-03C: Introduction to Philosophy

University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, Fall Semester 2020

Virtual Class

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Virtual Office Hours: 7-8 (PM) M/W and by appointment



From Rene Descartes (1677)

Course Description

This course will survey many of the seminal problems of Western philosophy in a structured, analytic fashion. We will read both historically influential philosophers as well as contemporary contributions to a variety of philosophical problems.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- explain the force of arguments and identify what makes “good” and “bad” arguments.
- explain some philosophical questions with knowledge claims, such as skepticism.
- identify arguments for the existence and non-existence of God, as well as criticisms of these arguments.
- identify the underlying issues that define the mind/body problem, and various “solutions” to the problem.
- explain the tension between free will and determinism, and identify various responses to this problem.
- identify several influential ethical theories and distinguish them through examples.

General Education Program - Humanities Category Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

- read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.

Required Texts

Perry, Bratman and Fischer, *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Seventh Edition. Oxford University Press.

All readings will also be posted on Canvas.

How this semester will work:

This class can be completed entirely online, somewhat on your own pace, with no live component. We will be holding a weekly (virtual) live meeting Wednesdays 9:30-10:45 (which is during our scheduled class time). In the live meetings we will discuss the material, address questions, and try to replicate the learning dynamic usually found in the in-person classes. These sessions will not be recorded and are not mandatory. I will also have office hours Monday and Wednesday 7-8. If you would like to meet during office hours, you will have to email me earlier so I can send you a link to our Zoom virtual office. If you can't meet during this time, I will be happy to schedule a time to meet that will work for both of us.

Late policy and timing of assignments, quizzes, papers, and exams:

You will have access to the readings for the entire semester, but you will only be able to complete quizzes during the week that they are due. The reason for this is two-fold: to motivate students to develop weekly habits to engage with the material, and so that students do not get too far ahead before taking exams. Exams will have to be taken anytime during the class day they are assigned. Thus, you cannot take them early or late, but only anytime during the day that they are assigned. Papers and quizzes can be submitted early. Quizzes cannot be taken late, and papers will be docked 10% per day late.

Graded Assignments

1. Ten Quizzes/Short Assignments (20% total)
2. Two Papers (10% each - 20% total)
3. Three Exams (20% each - 60% total)

Quizzes/Short Assignments: Quizzes will be up to five questions (true/false, multiple choice, or short answer questions) which will be related to the lectures or readings. We will have 12 quizzes or assignments, but only the best 10 will count. You have access to quizzes a few days in advance, but they must be completed by the end of the day that they are assigned.

Papers: Papers (750-1000 words) will summarize a debate or respond to a particular question. Prompts for papers will be provide, though students may also develop individual paper topics. Papers will be checked for "originality" via "Turnitin.com." Details and suggestions on writing papers, as well as grading criteria, will be distributed later in the semester.

Exams: There will be three exams. Exams will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer and essay questions. Exam dates are listed on the schedule and exams must be completed anytime during the day that they are due.

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

100-93	A	<87-83	B	<77-73	C	<67-60	D
<93-90	A-	<83-80	B-	<73-70	C-	<60	F
<90-87	B+	<80-77	C+	<70-67	D+		

Late Policy: Papers will be docked 10% off per day late. Exams cannot be made-up without a university approved absence notification (e.g. a note from a health care provider explaining why the student couldn't be there). Furthermore, you need to contact me immediately in order to reschedule the exam as early as possible. If this condition is not met, you may not be able to re-take the exam.

Academic Honesty: If you commit any acts of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism on written work or cheating on an exam) you will earn a zero for that work (and possibly other disciplinary actions). Please refer to the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures for more information (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf#page=11>).

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement: The ADA is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>.

If you require *classroom and/or exam accommodations*, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. For more information, please visit the Disability Center's office, located at 604 LRC or their webpage at: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>.

Schedule: Please note that there may be slight modifications to the schedule throughout the semester. Any changes will be emailed to you. Readings in our text, “Introduction to Philosophy” are listed as (IP) and readings on Canvas are listed as (CAN).

Date	Topic	Readings
W 9/2	Syllabus and Introduction	
M 9/7		No Class – Labor Day Holiday
W 9/9		Plato, “Apology: Defense of Socrates”
M 9/14		Logical Toolkit (IP) and Reasoning and Critical Thinking Handout (CAN)
W 9/16	Epistemology: Theory of Knowledge	Hume, “Miracles” (CAN)
M 9/21		Keeley, “Of Conspiracy Theories” (CAN)
W 9/23		Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , *only read sections I and II (IP)
M 9/28		Film: <i>The Matrix</i>
W 9/30		Grau, “Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine” (IP) and Review
M 10/5		EXAM
W 10/7	Philosophy of Mind	Fodor, “The Mind-Body Problem” (CAN)
M 10/12		Turing, “Computer Machinery and Intelligence” (IP)
W 10/14		Searle, <i>Minds, Brains, and Programs</i> (IP)
M 10/19		Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?” (CAN)
W 10/21	Philosophy of Religion	Aquinas, “Five Arguments for God’s Existence” (IP)
M 10/26		Hume, “Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion” *only read sections X and XI (IP)
W 10/28		Swinburne, “Why God Allows Evil” (CAN) and Review
M 11/2		EXAM
W 11/4	Free Will	Hume, “Of Liberty and Necessity” (IP)
M 11/9		Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self” (IP)
W 11/11		Fried, “Beyond Blame” (CAN)
M 11/16	Ethics	Rachels, “Cultural Relativism” (CAN)
W 11/18		Mill, “Utilitarianism” (IP)
M 11/23		Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (IP)
W 11/25		Velleman, “Kantian Ethics” (CAN)
M 11/30		O’neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems” (IP)
W 12/2		Aristotle, <i>Nichomachean Ethics</i> (IP)
M 12/7		Film: <i>Groundhog Day</i>
W 12/9	Meaning of Life	Wolf: “The Meanings of Life” (IP) and Review
R 12/17		FINAL EXAM