

Philosophy 101 G001 Introduction to Philosophy

**UW-Marathon Co/now "UWStevens Point at Wausau"
Fall 2018**

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MW – 10:35 to 11:50 am

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I read both emails, but I read the home one more frequently than the school email – even more so on weekends.

SYLLABUS

On what you are to learn in philosophy

Think of philosophy as an area in which competing views are examined. What is surprising is that you can *examine* things – but more on your own – if you look at competing views. So if you investigate matters by looking at alternative views, you are more likely doing philosophy – especially if you have to make up your own mind.

In doing this, you need to learn how to give or find reasons for holding or doing things. Philosophy isn't just a matter of having "an opinion." It is matter of being able to give that view support and also being able to criticize that view. The hope is that you can then learn how to meet the objections. You have to do this for views you like and those you don't. If you listen to two people debating each other (doing that carefully and not just yelling at each other) you will get an idea of how you are to think in philosophy; take that debate inside. An example: in college I was allowed to write a lengthy honors paper. I started out defending the view that there are no mental states, no thoughts, desires, or other things inside – even though we think that. I had been greatly influenced by some thinkers of the time to hold that. However there was one guy who argued against that view. I decided to make my honors thesis an attack on him. As I worked in my room I was giving reasons he might give and meeting them and then raising objections to his view and having him respond. A week or so of doing that got me start to like his position better and think there was something to it. Finally I realized I liked his position and the not ones I had been influenced by. I asked the chair of the department if I could change my thesis around. He had no problem with that. I wrote a thesis on how this guy's view was correct. To do that I had to raise objections to his view and meet them and give additional reasons for his view and imagine how someone would criticize those reasons and answer that! That should give an idea of how debate is deeply buried in philosophy.

In philosophy you are to learn skills, not come out with a bunch of "new" facts. It is also perfectly okay to write a paper defending a view you don't hold or attacking one you do hold! But even better, you might not be sure at all what position to hold. You look at criticisms of democracy and they look good to you. So write them up and explain them for a paper, even though you still hope democracy is a good form of government.

It will surprise you but the sciences (which you think so highly of and maybe are afraid of) come out of philosophy. Science was called “natural philosophy” at one point. Sciences are part of an effort to figure things out and to make some kind of roadmap of at least part of the world. That has been the goal of philosophy.

And in science if a basic view of something starts to be more fruitful than its competitors and that continues and supports research and exploration, we tend to call that “science.” But even in a science as you advance beyond the early courses, you encounter more and more arguments and debates! That shocks people.

Books to rent, buy, or have online access to:

Translations of Plato’s *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*, and *Symposium*. (Sometimes these are bound together, at least the first four often are.) And a translation of Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince*.

The ISBNs for what the campus bookstore orders (my guess is that for books like this they are as cheap as about anyone) are given below. These all should be fairly inexpensive. The rest of the reading is in the form of discussions (they will also appear on the class D2L site).

I am not fussy about which translations you use. If you use something different from what I do, you may have a few problems but not many.

a) Plato: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*. Prometheus Books. ISBN 0-87975-496-6 These are some of the early dialogues of Plato in which he represents

1. *Euthyphro*: Socrates encounters a young man who was recently appointed a prosecutor. That young man is Euthyphro. This is before Socrates’ own trial.
2. *Apology*: Socrates’ defense (“apology” can mean defense) before the Athenian court on charges that he corrupted youth and that he preached false gods and that he was an atheist. (This really occurred, we don’t know about his meeting with Euthyphro above and we don’t know if this is exactly what was said.)
3. *Crito*: Socrates’ arguments against his friend, Crito, who wanted to bribe the guards and get him free and escape Athens so he would not be put to death. Socrates argues he should accept death even though he is not guilty of the charges (I don’t know if this occurred, but something like it likely did.)
4. *Phaedo*: Socrates’ arguments for the immorality of the soul. This is in a scene which ends with him drinking the potion that puts him to death. Socrates really was put to death.

b) *The Symposium*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 978-0-14-044927-3. Here are a number of speeches on love. The last speech is Socrates repeating what he learned from a wise woman, Diotima. You will be given this in D2L, so you really don’t have to buy it, but a lot of us like books in our hand better than online.

c) Niccolo Machiavelli: *The Prince*. Penguin Classics. ISBN 0-14-044107-7. This is Machiavelli’s classic on how to rule a small state. It will sound rather brutal to you; we will discuss that. And don’t be misled. While this work is “how to be a strong one-man ruler” Machiavelli also liked republics (rule by a large group of important people representing much of the state).

If you are willing to read these online, I am quite sure all of these are available online (as in Google books). Look for old (very old) editions of these books, those should be free.

Graded Assignments:

Before I go into the regular grade assignments I can mention two things that might help you if you are close to a higher grade at the end of the term. Occasionally I give a surprise exercise. You are to answer some question. If you answer it honestly you can't flunk it. And if you do that, I put that down and keep track that you did that. The other thing is an announced "assessment exercise." I talk about that below under "Assessment." It, too, can help you if you are very close to a higher grade in the course near the end.

The regular graded assignments:

- 1) 1st In-class essay [13% of course grade] – September 20th
- 2) Paper 1 [24% of course grade] – October 12th
- 3) 2nd In-class essay [13% of course grade] – November 1st
- 4) Paper 2 [24% of course grade] – November 21st
- 5) Final exam [26% of course grade] – TBA

These assignments can be understood as follows:

In class essays are really single-question essay exams. You will not be running into true/false or multiple choice questions in any of my courses. (Although you write just one essay question, sometimes there is a choice of which question to answer.) Together these two in-class essays are over 1/4 of your grade, so it is good NOT to miss any.

The papers are of about 500 words in length (two pages). Each is worth 24% of your overall grade.

I give you study questions in advance of the in-class essays so you know what the essay will cover. If you can answer the study questions well, you will have the background needed for the in-class essay – even though I almost never put a study question as an essay question. The in-class essays are *open-book*, but if you reading it for the first time, you won't have time to do the exam.

Before a paper is due you are invited to submit a draft of it to me for review. E-mailing it to me is handy, because you don't have to set up an appointment and you can read my comments (my handwriting is very bad). I am happy to see you in my office or at the end of class to go over any draft you have. For each paper I offer a maximum of two responses to a draft.

Before any in class essay you can run your idea of answers past me.

The final exam can be done as a paper instead. If you take the final, you will have to write two essay questions.

Keeping track of your grade

The UW System is concerned that you know what grade you are running in your classes. Mid-term exams were instituted for that purpose because some instructors gave no feedback on what grade you were getting. With the D2L site for this class things are even better. Your grades are kept under "My Tools" then under "Grades"

and there are a couple of good things about this. First, you can check on me. You can see if we agree on my record-keeping. You may have rewritten a paper and I did not record the change. Secondly you can see what grade you are headed towards at the point you check on it (under “Calculated Final Grade” – remember that). If you can’t find your “Calculated Final Grade” (it is always the grade to which you are headed at the time), let me know. I like both features of D2L very much.

Office Times

My office is Room 329. That is upstairs at the north end of the main building. One up there look for the narrow hallways off the main hall. Room numbers in each direction should be posted. If you want a map of campus buildings and rooms, click on this (or paste into your browser):

http://uwmc.uwc.edu/sites/uwmc.uwc.edu/files/imce-uploads/about/overview/map/campus_building_map_wrooms-ro82512.pdf

My schedule is packed because I commute to Marshfield on Tuesdays and Thursdays and I am also taking choir here, Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Here are the times I plan to be sitting in my office and you don’t need to schedule anything:

Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:15 to 11:50 am

The 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month from 12:30 to 1:00 pm.

My last class on Mondays and Wednesday is over at 3:45, so you can set something up after that.

What about Fridays? Set something up between 1 and 2 pm at the campus. As it gets colder I can be there more times (I do mowing for the Monk Botanical Gardens Friday mornings, and when the grass stops growing I don’t do that! I also have departmental meetings at Point every three weeks, but that 1-2 pm period should be good even then.

I really like going over class work with students, so don’t be shy about setting something up.

And certainly use email to ask me questions or get help!

Course schedule:

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Week 1) Sept 5th

Class topics: The nature of philosophy, finding arguments and applying the ability to find arguments to proofs for and against God’s existence.

We start with proofs for and against God’s existence because dealing with such proofs helps to teach you how to argue and how to criticize arguments. I like these proofs because they have some substance and God’s existence is a topic of great interest in our culture. As pointed out above argumentative skills are crucial to learn in doing philosophy and will help you greatly in all your courses.

Reading: In the D2L site in Week 1 under “Content”:

Finding Arguments; Proofs for God's Existence (The Five Ways of Aquinas and Anselm's argument)

Graded assignment: None

2) Sept 11-13

Class topics: Arguments for and against God's existence, continued; What is a good objection to an argument and what is not

Reading: In the D2L site in Week 2 under "Content": "Some proofs that God does not exist"; "Proof against God the argument from evil" (a literary version of the argument from evil)

Graded assignment: None

3) Sept 18-20

Class topics: Arguments on God's existence continued.

Reading: In the D2L site in Week 3 under "Content": "Classic responses to the argument from evil."

Graded Assignment: 1st in class essay September 20th

4) Sept 25-27

Class topics: Background on Socrates and Plato; Discussion of Plato's *Euthyphro* (Socrates encounter with a young man who is going to prosecute his own father for murder.); Start of discussion of the *Apology* (Socrates' defense before the Athenian court)

Reading: Plato's *Euthyphro* and *Apology*. To help you, you can also read in the D2L site in Week 4 under "Content": *Euthyphro* discussion and *Apology* discussion.

Graded assignment: None

5) Oct 2-4

Class topics: Discussion of the *Apology* continued; Start of discussion of the *Crito* (Socrates' argument that he should obey Athenian law and not escape prison and his death)

Reading: Plato's *Crito*. To help you, you can also read in the D2L site in Week 5 under "Content": *Crito* discussion

Graded Assignment: None

6) Oct 9-11

Class topics: What obligation does one have to the ways (practices, unwritten laws) of one's people? Is that the same as the obligation one has to the laws of one's state?

It is really worse to be wronged than to do wrong? Discussion of the *Phaedo* (Socrates' arguments that there is life after death)

Reading: Plato's *Phaedo*. To help you, you can also read in the D2L site in Week 6 under "Content": Notes on Plato's *Phaedo*

Graded assignment: Paper 1 due, Friday, October 12th by 6:00 p.m.

7) Oct 16-18

Class topics: Finish discussion of the *Phaedo*; Discussion of arguments for life after death; what would the idea of life after death do for one? Start of discussion of the *Symposium* (Plato's dialogue on love)

Reading: Plato's *Symposium* (if you don't have a copy, there is one in D2L under Week 7: "Jowett's translation of Plato's *Symposium*." Also in Week 7 you need to read "Discussion of love and Diotima's views."

Graded assignment: None

8) Oct 23-25

Class topics: What love is the highest? Discussion of what love might be.

Reading: Finish the D2L Week 7 "Discussion of love and Diotima's views."

Graded Assignment: None

9) Oct 30-Nov 1

Class topics: Discussion of what love is supposed to do; Discussion of what is natural; What is homosexuality (and thus heterosexuality)?

Reading: In Week 9 under "Content" in D2L: "Homosexuality as part of a social division within society" and "Attitudes toward same sex orientation."

Graded assignment: 2nd in-class essay on November 1st

10) Nov 6-8

Class topics: Discussion of *The Prince* (Machiavelli's advice to someone taking over a small state)

Reading: Machiavelli's *The Prince* and in Week 10 in D2L: "Machiavelli Reading Questions."

Graded assignment: None

11) Nov 13-15

Class topics: Discussion of what democracy is; Discussion of what politics demands

Reading: none, this is class discussion.

Graded assignment: None

12) Nov 20

Class topics: What is feminism? What is a gender structure?

Reading: In D2L in Week 12: "Discussion of feminism" and "Herbert article on misogyny" and "Characterization of sexual harassment."

Graded Assignment: Paper 2 due **Wednesday** Nov 21st by 6:00 p.m.

13) Nov 27-29

Class topics: Things in the way of reporting abuse.

On racial categories: Why haven't Asian Americans lost their ethnicity (Korean-Americans tend to stay Korean-American and likewise for Chinese-Americans, Hmong Americans, but not so much for German Americans or English Americans or Irish Americans)?

Reading: In D2L Week 13): "Sexual Harassment and HR," "Sexual Harassment the depressing truth," "Things in the way of reporting abuse," and "The formation of whiteness and blackness - with the idea there being no real human races"

Graded assignment: None

14) Dec 4-6

Class topics: What is the racial structure in the US? Why don't white people know there is one (and cheerfully tell people who aren't white that racism is over)? How do the different definitions of racism lead to talking across one another?

Reading: D2L Week 14: "The racial structure and privilege"

Graded assignment: None

15) Dec 11-13

Class topics: What is affirmative action? Why are people (including some non-whites like Justice Clarence Thomas of the US Supreme Court) against it? Review for final.

Reading: D2L Week 15: "Affirmative action"

Graded assignment: None

Final exam TBA

The final paper (an alternative) is due the end of the (finally) scheduled final (Dropbox will close then).

