



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of Philosophy
PHIL 102: A1-E1
Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality
Fall 2023

Instructor: Thomas Oberle

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Office Hours: Online by appointment, Thursdays 12:00pm - 2:30pm. See eClass for details.

Course Location, Days and Times: ESB 2-36, MWF 10:00am – 10:50am.

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis people.

Course Information

It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisites for the course.

Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to some of the problems and techniques in two main areas of philosophy: metaphysics (the study of being or reality) and epistemology (the study of knowledge), as well as in such related areas as the philosophy of mind and philosophy of religion. We'll start by discussing the issue of appearance and reality and examine the idea that reality is, in some sense, one indivisible whole. We'll then look at classic arguments for and against the existence of God in the classical theist tradition. We'll then examine the nature of mind and consciousness and conclude with an examination of how knowledge is acquired.

We'll examine these issues together from many different works by well-known philosophers, written over a period of about 2500 years, in a variety of languages, and from different world regions. We study philosophy by doing philosophy ourselves in engagement with the philosophers who have come before. If pursued properly, philosophy can help clarify, deepen, and strengthen your thinking in many ways. It will also build conceptual skills and discipline that will help in just about any field or career.

Course Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. **Accurately explain** key aspects of philosophical theories and arguments by completing short writing assignments,
2. **Identify** key features and ideas of philosophical texts by completing multiple choice questions and short-answer questions,
3. **Read and comprehend** classical and contemporary philosophical texts,

4. **Analyze, evaluate, and compare** philosophical theories and arguments by writing short and long-answer questions, and
5. **Write** a well-organized, well-argued, and clearly articulated essay.

Course Format: This course will be taught in person. You will learn by attending lectures, doing weekly readings both in and out of class, and participating in class activities and discussions. Fridays are scheduled as seminar meetings. We will use Friday seminars both to cover course content and to discuss and develop the writing skills required for your assignments in this course.

Textbooks: There are no required texts. All readings are posted to eClass.

Important Dates:

First Day of Class: September 5

Add/Delete Date: September 18

50% Withdrawal Date: October 5

Withdrawal Date: December 1

Last Day of Class: December 8

Final Exam Date (tentative): December 12, 2:00pm.

Date of Deferred Final Exam: In consultation with instructor following approval from the student's faculty.

Lecture Schedule and Assigned Readings:

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
Unit 1: Metaphysics: Appearance and Reality			
1	September 5-8	Introduction	Thomas Wall, <i>Introduction</i> , (pages 2-8: skip the section on human nature at the end).
2	September 11-15	Pantheistic monism in Native American Indigenous philosophy	Basil Johnston, <i>The Manitous</i> , Introduction. V.F. Cordova, <i>How it Is</i> , chapter 3. V.F. Cordova, <i>The Concept of Monism in Navajo Thought</i> , chapter 7 .
3	September 18-22		

		Non-dualism in ancient Indian philosophy	Śaṅkara, <i>The Chāndogya Upanisad</i> , Discourse VI, sections 1-2 (pages 291-303).
4	September 25-29	The one and the many in Ancient Greek philosophy	<p>Parmenides, <i>On Nature</i>.</p> <p>Plato, <i>Republic</i>, selections from Book 7.</p> <p>Optional reading: Heinrich Päs, All is One.</p>
Unit 2: God's Existence			
5	October 2-6	Classical theism in Islamic and Western philosophy	<p>Anselm, Proslogion, chapters 1-3.</p> <p>Avicenna (Ibn Sina), selections from <i>The Salvation, Metaphysics</i>.</p>
6	October 11-13 No class October 9, Thanksgiving.	Arguments for God's existence	<p>Émilie Du Châtelet, <i>The Foundations of Physics</i>, chapter 2, pages 139-147.</p> <p>David Hume, Dialogue Concerning Natural Religion, Part 9.</p>
7	October 16-20	God and the problem of evil	<p>William Rowe, The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism.</p> <p>Brian Davies, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, chapter 10 (pages 208-236).</p>
Unit 3: Mind and Consciousness			

8	October 23-27	The mind-body problem	René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy , first, second and sixth meditations. Avicenna (Ibn Sina), <i>The Cure</i> , section 4. Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia's correspondence with Descartes .
9	October 30- November 3	Can computers think?	Jaegwon Kim, <i>What Could Pair a Soul to a Body?</i> John Searle, Is the Mind's Brain a Computer Program?
10	November 6-10	The problem of consciousness	David Chalmers, <i>The Puzzle of Conscious Experience</i> . Thomas Nagel, What is it Like to be a Bat? Frank Jackson, Epiphenomenal Qualia .
11	November 14-17 Reading Week: No Classes		
Unit 4: Knowledge			
12	November 20-24	Rationalism	René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy , third and fourth meditations. Plato, Phaedo .

13	November 27- December 1	Empiricism	David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, Book 1 , Part 1, Chapter 1: The Origin of Ideas. John Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> , Book 1, chapter 2, Book 2, Chapter 1 .
14	December 4-8	Skepticism and conclusion	Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment? Bertrand Russell, The Value of Philosophy .

Components of Course Grade:

Component	Weighting	Date*
8 Short writing assignments	16% (2% each)	September 15, 22, 29 October 6, 27 November 24 December 1, 8
2 paper outlines	12% (6% each)	October 13, November 3
Paper 1	16%	October 20
Paper 2	20%	November 10
Final Exam	36%	December 12 (tentative)

***All assignments are due at 11:59pm on their respective due dates.**

The weighting of each assignment represents the percentage of your final grade that each assignment is worth. You will find detailed assignment instructions and grading rubrics for each assignment on eClass. **All assignments are due at 11:59pm on their respective due dates** and must be submitted online via eClass.

Short writing assignments

You will have the opportunity to complete 8 short writing assignments (200-300 words), each worth 2% of your final grade. The assignments are meant to encourage you to think

philosophically about the issues addressed in the readings and lectures and to communicate philosophical ideas clearly and effectively in writing. For each assignment, you will respond to a prompt provided by the instructor asking you to explain and evaluate a portion of the readings for that given week. **You will find the short writing assignment prompts in the short writing assignment submission folders on eClass.**

Late short writing assignments will not be accepted. The reasons for this policy are twofold. First, the assignments are short and worth a relatively small portion of your final grade. Second, you should have no difficulty scoring full points if you do the readings and attend the lectures regularly.

Paper Outlines

You will draft an outline for each paper you write in this course and submit it to your instructor for feedback. Each outline will be one page in length, single-spaced. A paper outline template and instructions are provided on eClass. The purpose of this assignment is a) to get you thinking systematically about the paper assignment, b) to implement feedback for the paper assignment itself, and c) to discourage plagiarism.

Late paper outlines will not be accepted. Since the purpose of the outline is to improve your paper, the outline must be submitted on-time prior to the submission of your paper assignment.

Papers

You will write two argumentative papers for this course, each 1000-1250 words in length. For each paper assignment, the instructor will provide several topics or prompts to choose from. The instructor has also provided detailed instructions on eClass for how to write a philosophy paper. The second paper assignment is worth more of your final grade than the first because you will have a better understanding of your instructor's expectations after writing your first paper assignment.

Final Exam

The final exam will be comprehensive and will be comprised of short-answer, long-answer, and multiple-choice questions. Your instructor will post sample final-exam questions to eClass.

Grading: Student grades are unofficial until they have been approved by Arts Faculty Council or delegate.

Grade	Percentage	Grade Point
A+	90-100	4.0
A	85-90	4.0
A-	80-84	3.7
B+	77-79	3.3
B	73-76	3.0
B-	70-72	2.7
C+	67-69	2.3
C	63-66	2.0
C-	60-62	1.7
D+	57-59	1.3

D	50-56	1.0
F	0-49	0.0

Attendance and Participation: Your instructor will **not** post PowerPoint slides to eClass. It is, therefore, your responsibility to attend class regularly for optimal performance in this course. If you must miss class for a legitimate reason, you should contact your instructor to discuss any questions you may have about the course content.

Policy for Late Assignments:

It is vital that you complete your assignments on time so as not to fall behind. Late short writing assignments and paper outlines **will not be accepted**.

Late paper assignments will be penalized 3% per day for 1 week (7 days) including weekends and holidays, **after which late papers will not be accepted**. So, if you scored 100% (A+) on your assignment and you submitted your assignment 7 days late, a penalization of 21% would translate to receiving a B+. If you scored 80% (A-), an assignment submitted 7 days late would receive a D+, etc.

Your instructor will grant extensions for assignments if you contact your instructor in advance of the assignment deadline (that is, not on the day the paper is due) and your reasons for seeking an extension are **serious** and **valid**. These may include sickness, religious observance, personal crisis, etc. Forgetting to submit an assignment is not a valid reason for an extension.

Missed Tests and Assignments:

Receiving alternate arrangements for the completion of term work is a privilege and not a right. There is no guarantee that late work will be accepted or that an absence will be excused. Misrepresentation of facts to gain an unfair academic advantage over other students is a serious breach of the [Code of Student Behaviour](#).

Deferred Final Examination: Students must apply to their home Faculty for a deferred examination. The application form for Arts students is in "Forms for Students" on [the Arts Student Services site](#).

Past Evaluative Material:

Your instructor will post sample final-exam questions to eClass.

Student Responsibilities

Academic Integrity: The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (on the [University Governance](#) website) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts, and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

Instructors are required to report suspected violations of the COSB. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

All students should consult [the Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor. Students who want to strengthen their academic skills and learn more on topics such as note-taking, time management, and academic integrity are encouraged to explore [The Academic Success Centre](#).

Recording of Lectures: Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Learning and Working Environment

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment.

If you are experiencing harassment, discrimination, fraud, theft or any other issue and would like confidential advice and information, please contact any of these campus services:

- [Office of Safe Disclosure & Human Rights](#): A safe, neutral and confidential space to disclose concerns about how the University of Alberta policies, procedures or ethical standards are being applied. They provide strategic advice and referral on matters such as discrimination, harassment, duty to accommodate and wrong-doings. Disclosures can be made in person or online using the [Online Reporting Tool](#)
- [University of Alberta Protective Services](#): Peace officers dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of U of A campuses and community. Staff or students can contact UAPS to make a report if they feel unsafe, threatened, or targeted on campus or by another member of the university community. For non-emergency dispatch, call 780-492-5050. For lost and found, call 780-492-2943. **In an emergency, call 911.**
- [Sexual Violence Supports](#): - It is the [policy](#) of the University of Alberta that sexual violence committed by any member of the University community is prohibited and constitutes misconduct.

Student Resources

[The University Calendar](#) is one of the principal sources of U of A policy information for students. It includes admission requirements and deadlines, academic regulations, programs of study, academic standards, degree requirements, and University policies for both undergraduate and graduate students.

[The Student Service Centre](#) provides students with information and access to services to

support academic, financial, mental, and physical well-being.

[First Peoples' House](#) provides an environment of empowerment for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners to achieve personal and academic growth.

[The Academic Success Centre](#) provides professional academic support to help students maximize their academic success and achieve their academic goals. They offer appointments, advising, group workshops, online courses, and specialized programming year-round to students in all university programs, and at all levels of achievement and study.

[Writing Services](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request a consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

Under the [Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate policy](#), the Office of the Dean of Students coordinates academic accommodations for prospective and current students with documented disabilities affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, and physical or mental health. The provision of academic accommodations helps to remove structural barriers that these students encounter in academic environments in order to facilitate equivalent learning opportunities for these students. [Academic Accommodations](#) promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally-designed environment at the University of Alberta.

[Health and Wellness Support for Students](#) outlines the mental and physical health resources which are offered on-campus and in the community.

[The Office of the Student Ombuds](#) is a confidential service which strives to ensure that university processes related to students operate as fairly as possible. They offer information, advice, and support to students, faculty, and staff as they deal with academic, discipline, interpersonal, and financial issues related to student programs.

[Need Help Now](#) webpage offers contact information for a variety of supports if you are in immediate need of mental health and wellness support. You can also call the 24-hour Distress Line: 780-482-4357 (HELP).

Disclaimer: Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass. The date of the final examination is set by the Registrar and takes precedence over the final examination date reported in this syllabus.

Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading](#) in the University Calendar.

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