

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

MWF ##:##-##:## ❖ Room: #####

While the word 'philosophy' may conjure up images of mystical gurus and arcane, dusty books, we can find the problems of philosophy inherent in everyday life. This will become clear when we begin by asking: what really matters in life? Once we attempt to pry apart what is valuable and what is not, we are led to concerns of justice, not only the "good," but the "right" as well. In looking at some moral problems, we realize that questions of justice and morality lead to further dilemmas. We examine the problem of giving informed consent, which presses us to look into the meaning of knowledge, reason and understanding. We also discuss end-of-life care and mental disability, which leads us to the nature of consciousness and the human soul. We finally tie these considerations together by examining some emerging problems with humans and intelligent machines.

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Office Location: TBD  
Office Hours: TBD

## Required Text

- » Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

*All additional readings will be distributed through the university's online platform.*

## Learning Outcomes

This course serves as an introduction to philosophical perspectives value, morality, knowledge and existence. By the conclusion of this course, students will produce a well-organized argumentative paper that demonstrates their ability to reason and express themselves clearly. Throughout the course, students will also:

- » Learn to analyze and criticize philosophical arguments.
- » Practice reformulating difficult philosophical arguments in their own voice.
- » Acquire a philosophical vocabulary and a basic understanding of the range of philosophical dilemmas.
- » Further develop independence of thought.
- » Improve their critical thinking and writing abilities.

## Assessment

To benefit from this course, you must be prepared and engaged in class. This means being on time and completing required assignments before class.

The grading distribution is as follows:

Short Assignments: 35%. There will be six short assignments. These assignments will consist of quizzes and homework responses. Out of the six total assignments, the lowest score will be dropped from the final grade. Quizzes cannot be made up and response assignments will not be accepted late without a legitimate formal excuse. Quizzes will generally be unannounced and response assignments will be handed out in class, so it is important to attend class every day.

**Blog posts: 15%.** This class will require two blog posts on a popular platform of the student's choosing. The first post will be an informative "consciousness raising" piece to explain a philosophical problem to a popular audience. The second post will take an argumentative stance about a controversial philosophical issue.

**Media Project: 10%.** Students may choose to do either an audio or video project. The audio project consists of a recorded philosophical dialogue with a friend, family member or colleague. The video project involves a video response to an internet video with philosophical content.

**Final Exam: 15%.** The final exam will be comprehensive. It could include essays, matching questions, short answer questions, multiple choice questions or definitions.

**Final Paper: 15%.** Students will write an argumentative paper on either knowledge, value or consciousness. Prompts will be distributed, but students are free to write on any relevant topic they like. This paper may also take the form of an extended blog post. More information about the paper and a grading rubric will be distributed at a later date.

**Participation: 10%.** Students will be expected to attend class and participate in class discussions and workshop activities.

### **Class Policies**

*Attendance* - Missing a significant amount of class will result in missed response assignments, missed blog posts, missed quizzes and a reduced class participation grade. Students will also be responsible for lecture material on the final exam. Homework response assignments must be turned in on the online platform and as a hard copy in class. Any response assignments turned in only on the online platform will not be graded. Response assignments, blog posts, quizzes, the media project and the final exam cannot be made up without a formal excuse.

*Electronic Devices* - Tablets, e-readers, smartphones and laptops are permitted in class, as long as they do not become a distraction. If electronic devices become a distraction, this policy will become significantly more restrictive and only select electronic devices will be permitted.

*Late Assignments* - Late response assignments and blog posts will not be accepted without a formal excuse. The final paper and media project will be accepted after the day they are due, but either will lose a third of a grade point for each day it is late. For example, an A paper turned in one day late will be assigned an A-. For those students who present a valid formal excuse, makeup work is due by the last day of classes.

*Disabilities or Special Needs* - I am happy to accommodate students with disabilities or special needs. Any student requiring special accommodations should speak to the instructor immediately.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

No cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Clear cases of cheating or plagiarizing will result in an immediate F for the assignment. Be aware that unintentional plagiarism still counts as plagiarism. If you copy a passage or idea from your notes and forget where it came from, that still counts as plagiarism. It is up to you to make sure that you properly cite any claim, passage or idea that is not your own. Ideas in student writing that are not original or properly cited will count as plagiarism. Please look over the university's policy on plagiarism carefully.

## Course Outline

Please make sure to read the assigned reading *before* class.

Week	Content
Introduction and Value Theory	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Introduction to philosophy (no reading)</li> <li>– W <i>Theories of Value</i>, Introduction and Hedonism</li> <li>– F D. Haybron <i>The Pursuit of Unhappiness</i> (excerpt)</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Labor Day (no class)</li> <li>– W <i>Theories of Value</i>, Preference Satisfaction</li> <li>– F A.M. Slaughter, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All"</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M <i>Theories of Value</i>, Objective List</li> <li>– W T.M. Cottom "The Coded Language of For-Profit Colleges"</li> <li>– F M.L. King Jr. "The Quest for Peace and Justice"</li> </ul>
Theories of Right and Wrong	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M "Contemporary Utilitarianism"</li> <li>– W P. Singer "Why We Must Ration Healthcare"</li> <li>– F Workshop on utilitarianism and bioethics (no reading)</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M "Contemporary Deontology"</li> <li>– W Simpson and Srinivasan "No Platforming"</li> <li>– F Workshop on deontology and speech ethics (no reading)</li> </ul>
Informed Consent and Knowledge	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Beauchamp &amp; Childress "The meaning and justification..." pp. 117-121</li> <li>– W Beauchamp &amp; Childress "The nature of understanding" pp. 127-132</li> <li>– F Plato <i>Meno</i> 70-79e</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Mid-Semester Break (no class)</li> <li>– W Plato <i>Meno</i> 80-89e</li> <li>– F Plato <i>Meno</i> 90-100c</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Mid-semester Review</li> <li>– W R. Descartes <i>Meditations</i> "First Meditation"</li> <li>– F R. Descartes <i>Meditations</i> "Second Meditation"</li> </ul>
Ignorance	
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M N.N. Taleb "The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable"</li> <li>– W C. O'Neil "When Not to Trust The Algorithm"</li> <li>– F N. Tuana "The Speculum of Ignorance"</li> </ul>
Consciousness and Disability	
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M P. Singer <i>Practical Ethics</i> pp. 155-159, 167-169</li> <li>– W R. Descartes <i>Meditations</i> "Sixth Meditation" pp. 47-53</li> <li>– F Writing Workshop #1 (no reading)</li> </ul>

Week	Content
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M R. Descartes <i>Meditations</i> "Sixth Meditation" pp. 54-59</li> <li>- W D. Chalmers "How do you explain consciousness?" (video)</li> <li>- F D. Dennett "The illusion of consciousness" (video)</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M T. Powell "Brain Death: What Health Professionals Should Know"</li> <li>- W J. Fins "We can rewrite the script..."</li> <li>- F Writing Workshop #2 (no reading)</li> </ul>
<b>Intelligent Machines</b>	
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M S. Schneider "The Philosophy of 'Her' "</li> <li>- W Thanksgiving Break (no class)</li> <li>- F Thanksgiving Break (no class)</li> </ul>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M Kelly &amp; Dreyfus "Watson Still Can't Think"</li> <li>- W Workshop on philosophy and professional development (no reading)</li> <li>- F R. Jenkins "Autonomous Vehicles: Ethics &amp; Law" (excerpt)</li> </ul>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M Writing Workshop #3</li> <li>- W Flex day</li> <li>- F Final review</li> </ul>