

Year Course Offered: annually

Semester Course Offered: fall or spring

Department: Humanities

Course Number: PHIL 1301

Name of Course: Introduction to Philosophy

Name of Instructor: TBD

The information contained in this class syllabus is subject to change without notice. Students are expected to be aware of any additional course policies presented by the instructor during the course.

Course Description:

Considering the history of Western philosophy as a whole, we can identify three broad types of questions that have drawn the most attention. We can express those questions like this:

1) What is the fundamental nature of reality, the deep structure behind the way things merely appear? Is basic reality one or many? Is it material? Is it mental? What are matter and mind?

The branch of philosophy that studies such questions is metaphysics.

2) What is knowledge and how do we know things? How much can we know? How do we justify our beliefs and thereby distinguish those that are rational from those that are not? Can we achieve certainty, or must we settle for something less?

The branch of philosophy that studies such questions is epistemology.

3) What is the best way to live? What kinds of duties and responsibilities do we have? What is the basis for saying that some things are right and other things are wrong? What is truly valuable and how may it be distinguished from what only appears valuable?

The branch of philosophy that studies such questions is ethics.

Learning Objectives

1. Read, analyze, and critique philosophical texts.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of major arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.
3. Articulate key conceptual distinctions in philosophy.
4. Present logically persuasive arguments in writing.
5. Demonstrate an ability to discuss and reflect upon the application of the course material to various aspects of life.
6. Evaluate the personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world.

Core Objectives

Introduction to Philosophy addresses the following core objectives to ensure students develop the essential knowledge and skills they need to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in their lives. The core objectives meet the Texas Core Curriculum objectives for the Language, Philosophy, & Culture Foundational Component Area

- Critical Thinking Skills - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills - to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication

Major Assignments:

Writing assignments=80% (four papers each worth 20%)

Participation: 20%

There will be four short papers (1000 words) each based on one of the four major course texts. The paper assignments are aimed at achieving the specified learning objectives and satisfying the Texas core objectives of critical thinking and communications skills. Assignments will achieve these goals by having students critically analyze the primary philosophic text (learning objective #1) and demonstrate their understanding of the various philosophic arguments (learning objective #2 and 3) through well-constructed academic prose (learning objective #4).

Each class students will be broken up into small groups responsible for discussing one side of a philosophic debate raised by the reading for that session. The groups are responsible for presenting the most persuasive argument for their side in a debate format. The group work will allow students to reflect on the philosophic issue in a more personal way (learning objective #5) and to gain an appreciation for other people's ideas (learning objective #6).

Assessment of Texas core objectives:

The written assignments will be used to evaluate a student's status regarding the Texas core objectives of critical thinking and communication skills. Students will be evaluated on a three point scale: exemplary; satisfactory, unsatisfactory. Students must demonstrate critical engagement and strong academic writing skills in these assignments. An A paper average will receive exemplary status regarding the two objectives; a B or C average will receive satisfactory status; below a C average will receive unsatisfactory status.

Learning Outcomes	CO	Assessment Methods	Criteria/Targets
Read, analyze, and critique philosophical texts.	CT, COM	Short papers	Using a rubric, students will be assessed on a 3-point scale: excellent, acceptable, not acceptable. At least 70% of the students will score acceptable or above.
Demonstrate knowledge of major arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.	CT, COM	Short papers	Using a rubric, students will be assessed on a 3-point scale: excellent, acceptable, not acceptable. At least 70% of the students will score acceptable or above.
Articulate key conceptual distinctions in philosophy.	CT, COM	Short papers	Using a rubric, students will be assessed on a 3-point scale: excellent, acceptable, not acceptable. At least 70% of the students will score acceptable or above.
Present logically persuasive arguments in writing.	CT, COM	Short papers	Using a rubric, students will be assessed on a 3-point scale: excellent, acceptable, not acceptable. At least 70% of the students will score acceptable or above.
Demonstrate an ability to discuss and reflect upon the application of the course material to various aspects of life.	PR, SR	Short papers	Students will be evaluated on a three point scale: exemplary; satisfactory; or unsatisfactory. Although all of the material has both personal and social implications, two reaction papers (one targeted at personal responsibility and one targeted at social responsibility) will be used as a benchmark for evaluation. Students assessed an A for this assignment will receive exemplary status, students receiving a B or C will receive satisfactory status, and students receiving below a C will receive unsatisfactory status.

<p>Evaluate the personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world.</p>	<p>PR, SR</p>	<p>Short papers</p>	<p>Students will be evaluated on a three point scale: exemplary; satisfactory; or unsatisfactory. Although all of the material has both personal and social implications, two reaction papers (one targeted at personal responsibility and one targeted at social responsibility) will be used as a benchmark for evaluation. Students assessed an A for this assignment will receive exemplary status, students receiving a B or C will receive satisfactory status, and students receiving below a C will receive unsatisfactory status.</p>
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Required Reading

Plato's *Republic*, Descartes's *Meditations*, Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and Mill's *Utilitarianism*.

Recommended Reading

John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*

List of Discussion/Lecture Topics

The following is a list of topics that will be covered for each of the four course texts:

What is justice?

Theory of Ideas

Education of leaders

The ideal City

Censorship

Was Plato a totalitarian?

Descartes:

Skepticism

Certainty

Rationalism

God

The Soul

Hume:

Impressions and ideas

Relations of ideas and matters of fact

Causation

Critique of Induction

Miracles

Mill:

Hedonic calculus

The greatest good