

PHIL 101 - 001: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

2024 Summer, Term 1: May 13 – June 20 2024

Mondays & Wednesdays 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Online (Zoom), synchronous

Although this course is online, UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. This acknowledgment represents an active dedication to more just, more accountable relations.

Instructor

Dr. Celia Edell

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Office hours: available by appointment

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to philosophy through the study of some of the most important works in the western philosophical tradition. We will also engage with a work of contemporary public philosophy each week to complement. The course will consider questions of reality, personal identity, theories of morality, justice and oppression, sex, love, death, and meaning.

Philosophy is an activity – it is not just something you learn, but something you do. This course is meant to do more than just teach you what other people thought. You will have the opportunity to think through the ideas yourself and with others.

Course Schedule

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| May 13 | Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"
Discussion paper: Abundez-Guerra & Nobis "Responding to Morally Flawed Historical Philosophers and Philosophies"
https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2018/07/17/flawed-philosophers/ |
| May 15 | Plato, <i>The Republic</i> [excerpt]
Discussion paper: Nguyen, "Escape the echo chamber"
https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult |
| May 20 | Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" |
| May 22 | Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"
Discussion paper: Strohminger, "The self is moral"
https://aeon.co/essays/moral-character-is-the-foundation-of-a-sense-of-personal-identity |

- May 27 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* [excerpt]
Discussion paper: Craitu, “Moderation may be the most challenging and rewarding virtue”
- May 29 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [excerpt]
- June 3 Mill, *Utilitarianism*
- June 5 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [excerpts]
Discussion paper: Alexander, “What if We’re All Coming Back?”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/29/opinion/climate-change-politics-john-rawls.html>
- June 10 Frye, “Oppression”
Discussion paper: Thakkar, “The ugly truth”
<https://aeon.co/essays/if-society-prizes-beauty-are-ugly-people-oppressed>
- June 12 Migotti and Wyatt, "On the Very Idea of Sex with Robots"
- June 17 Beauvoir, “The Woman in Love”
Discussion paper: Jenkins, “How a hackneyed romantic ideal is used to stigmatise polyamory”
<https://aeon.co/ideas/how-a-hackneyed-romantic-ideal-is-used-to-stigmatise-polyamory>
- June 19 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

Class structure

10am-11am: Lecture

11am-11.30am: Q&A / Class discussion

11.30-11.45pm: Break

11.45pm-12.50pm: Activity / Paper analysis in breakout groups

Discussion paper analysis due by 11.59pm PST each class day

Learning Objectives

Each class students will be introduced to a philosophical framework in lecture, followed by a Q&A and class-wide discussion for clarification and deeper understanding. In the last hour of class students will work in breakout groups to discuss and analyse the paired public philosophy piece in relation to the lecture. Students are expected to read both papers before each class.

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Explain and outline arguments in canonical philosophical works. (paper analysis group work, midterm exam)
2. Evaluate the strength of arguments in assigned texts, in oral or written work by other students, and their own arguments. (class discussions, paper analyses, final essay)
3. Make a claim about a philosophical issue and defend it with sound reasoning, in writing. (paper analysis group work, final essay)
4. Participate in a respectful discussion with others on a philosophical question: clarify positions and arguments from themselves or others, criticize flawed arguments, present their own arguments, and do all this in manner that respects the other people in the discussion. (class discussions, paper analysis group work)

Assessments of Learning

- (1) Q&A participation (10%)
- (2) Midterm exam (20%)
- (3) Discussion paper analysis - in groups (40%)
- (4) Final Exam (30%)

(1) Q&A participation (10%)

You will gain participation grades for asking thoughtful questions on Canvas (discussion post) *before* class. These questions should be prompts for discussion, not simply clarifying questions. The Q&A time following the lecture will be used to discuss some of these questions.

(2) Midterm exam (20%)

To be completed and submitted on Canvas. It is open book, and you will have 1 day to complete the exam.

(3) Discussion paper analysis [group work] (40%)

The essay not covered in lecture will be a public philosophy piece related to the lecture reading. In groups, you will work together (in groups of 4-5 students) to analyze the connections between the two readings (one covered in the lecture) and write a brief response to a prompt.

5 discussion paper analyses are due over the term. Each analysis is worth 8% of your overall grade.

The discussion paper analyses will be graded on understanding of and engagement with the two texts, and how thoughtfully the analysis responds to the prompt(s). Each analysis paper should be

roughly 1-2 double-spaced pages in length. These are brief responses to show you've considered and discussed the readings and prompting questions.

These will be done in groups on Zoom (your group can also choose to work on Google docs or some other platform, if you all agree to it). The benefit of working on Zoom is that I will remain in the main Zoom room during this time, so you can contact me if you need help.

You will submit your discussion paper analyses on Canvas by 11:59PM PST the day of class. All group member names (that were present to write it) should be listed on the document itself.

Late submissions for those who missed class will not be accepted without an official accommodation/doctor's note. If you know ahead of time that you need to miss a class, please contact your professor to arrange a make-up assignment.

(4) Final Exam (30%)

To be completed and submitted on Canvas. It is open book, and you will have 1 day to complete the exam.

Class Policies

Reading

You do not need to buy any textbooks for this course. Public philosophy works will be linked on the syllabus. Other reading materials can be downloaded from Canvas.

Lecture Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants during the lecture. Please refrain from using computers and other electronic devices for purposes not related to the lectures, e.g. messaging, watching videos, playing games, online shopping, etc. Such behaviours are both disruptive and disrespectful. Students are also expected to take part in in-class learning activities and discussions. Improper use of electronic devices, disruptive and disrespectful behaviour, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviour, if repeated, will result in disciplinary actions.

Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance is a requirement of the course. Discussion and interactivity are crucial elements to learn philosophy. You are learning a skill, not just a list of facts. Philosophy cannot be 'crammed'. There are two ways that the attendance requirement is enforced. First, formally, there is a participation component to student grades, as described above. Second, informally, I consider regular attendance to be indicative of dedication to the course, so I am much more inclined to make arrangements for things like extensions, excused assignments, etc. for students who are regular course participants. If you ask for a concession that is a matter of discretion, you will have a much higher chance of a positive response if you have a track record of coming and participating in lectures and tutorials.

Grading Standards

Specific grading guidelines for essays will be provided later in the course and will be available on the course website.

- 80% to 100% (A- to A+) Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
- 68% to 79% (B- to B+) Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- 50% to 67% (D to C+) Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
- 00% to 49% (F) Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

University Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Academic Accommodation

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations

must register with the Centre for Accessibility (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

Equity and special arrangements

I will do my best to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable opportunity for participation and success in the course. If you need accommodations to complete your coursework please speak with the Access and Diversity office, if you haven't already: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity> If you have religious obligations that conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations, these can be accommodated as well. See the university policy on religious holidays at: <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf>. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation due to religious obligations. If you need to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, please discuss those with Celia before the drop date, as these do not fall under official accommodations by the university.