

# PHIL 101: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

## *sample syllabus*

### OVERVIEW

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This course provides a study of philosophy as an interpretation of human experience and an examination of concepts and assumptions fundamental in human thought. We will survey the major themes in metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and value theory—including the nature of reality, the definition of knowledge, the scope and importance of ethics for a Good Life, and whether human beings have a privileged status in nature.

### TEXTBOOKS

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Steven M. Cahn – *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.* – ISBN: 9780190204419

René Descartes – *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.* – ISBN: 9780872204201

### ASSIGNMENTS

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**Quizzes** – Five, online, one at the end of each unit. Multiple choice and essays. **10% x 4 = 40%**

**Outlines** – Brief summaries or bulleted outlines of each of the class readings. Twice a week for ten weeks. **20%**

**Final exam** – In class. Multiple choice and essay. You can use one letter-sized “cheat sheet.” **20%**

**Participation** – Both frequency and quality count, and your attendance is factored in as well. **20%**

### FORMAT

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Each class period contains both lecture and discussion, though often more of the latter. I lecture in a Socratic way, meaning that I frequently ask you to interject and you are responsible for supplying the material as I explain it.

For each day we read one or two papers, essays, or articles. Each day I call upon two students to briefly summarize the day’s readings. These summaries contribute to your discussion grade.

The reading load is about 10-15 pages per class period. Most papers are technical and take 1-2 hours to read, depending on your prior philosophical reading experience.

### POLICIES

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Laptops and tablets are permitted; phones are not. Use common sense and do not bother yourself or others.

Arriving over 15 minutes later is considered an unexcused absence. If I am over 15 minutes late, you may leave.

Attendance and participation are graded subjectively. The more you talk, the more quickly I learn your name.

Late assignments incur a 10% penalty (one letter grade) for each day, unless I have granted an extension.

Extensions, grade disputes, and requests for incomplete grades will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

E-mail is my preferred method of communication. I reply within 48 hours. If I do not, e-mail me again.

The First Rule of Good Discussion: “**Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.**”

### ACCOMMODATION

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Please inform me by the end of the first week of class of any health concerns or documented physical, mental, or learning disabilities. We will work together to help you succeed according to your abilities.


### HONOR CODE

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I take the Honor Code very seriously. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court and pursued.

## READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

(C) = Reading is in the Cahn book. (D) = Reading is in the Descartes book.


All other readings are on Canvas or on the Internet: click the link  in the PDF version of this syllabus.

All readings must be completed by class time. All reading outlines must be submitted before class begins.

### (1) PHILOSOPHY AS RATIONAL INQUIRY

Week 1 Introduction	Course presentation	M 8/28
	(C) <b>Beardsley</b> : What is philosophy?	W 8/30
	(C) <b>Russell</b> : The value of philosophy	F 9/1
Week 2 Meditations	(D) <b>Descartes</b> : Meditations One and Two	M 9/4
	(D) <b>Descartes</b> : Meditations Three and Five ( <i>and quickly skim Meditation Four</i> )	W 9/6
	(D) <b>Descartes</b> : Meditation Six	F 9/8
Assignment	<b>Quiz #1 due online</b>	

### (2) EPISTEMOLOGY: THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Week 3 Deception	(C) <b>Russell</b> : Appearance and reality	M 9/11
	<b>Plato, Aristotle, Zhuāng Zǐ</b> : various sources <b>Pollock</b> : A brain in a vat	W 9/13
	<b>Bostrom</b> : <a href="#">The simulation argument</a> 	F 9/15
Week 4 Knowledge	(C) <b>Zagzebski</b> : Caring and epistemic demands	M 9/18
	(C) <b>Gettier</b> : Is justified true belief knowledge? (C) <b>Nozick</b> : Conditions for knowledge	W 9/20
	<b>Williamson</b> : Excerpts from <i>Knowledge and Its Limits</i>	F 9/22
Week 5 Induction	(C) <b>Hume</b> : Excerpts from <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	M 9/25
	(C) <b>Russell</b> : The problem of induction	W 9/27
	(C) <b>Strawson</b> : Induction without a problem	F 9/29
Assignment	<b>Quiz #2 due online</b>	

### (3) METAPHYSICS: THE NATURE OF REALITY

Week 6 Personhood	(C) <b>Smart</b> : A case of identity (C) <b>Perry</b> : The problem of personal identity <b>Johnson</b> : Teleportation and personal identity	M 10/2
	<b>Dennett</b> : Where am I? <b>Kurzweil</b> : Who am I? What am I?	W 10/4
	(C) <b>Parfit</b> : The unimportance of identity (C) <b>Warren</b> : On the moral and legal status of abortion ( <i>as relates to personhood of fetus</i> )	F 10/6

Week 7 Mind	(C) <b>Ryle</b> : The ghost in the machine	M 10/9
	(C) <b>Nagel</b> : What is it like to be a bat? (C) <b>Lewis</b> : Knowing what it's like	W 10/11
	(C) <b>Turing</b> : Computer machinery and intelligence (C) <b>Searle</b> : Do computers think?	F 10/13
Week 8 God	(C) <b>Anselm and Gaunilo</b> : The ontological argument <b>Mavrodes</b> : Some puzzles concerning omnipotence	M 10/16
	(C) <b>Paley</b> : Natural theology (C) <b>Hume</b> : Excerpts from <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i>	W 10/18
	(C) <b>Pascal</b> : The wager <b>Bostrom</b> : <a href="#">Pascal's mugging</a> 🗡️	F 10/20
Assignment	<b>Quiz #3 due online</b>	

#### (4) VALUE THEORY: THE ORDER OF JUSTICE

Week 9 Ethics	(C) <b>O'Neill</b> : Kant's ethics	M 10/23
	(C) <b>Pojman</b> : Assessing utilitarianism	W 10/25
	(C) <b>Mayo</b> : Virtue ethics (C) <b>Held</b> : The ethics of care	F 10/27
Week 10 Politics	<b>Ball &amp; Dagger</b> : Ideology and ideologies	M 10/30
	(C) <b>Nozick</b> : Distributive justice	W 11/1
	(C) <b>Sen</b> : The idea of justice	F 11/3
Week 11 Contract	(C) <b>Hobbes</b> : Excerpts from <i>Leviathan</i>	M 11/6
	(C) <b>Locke</b> : Excerpts from <i>Two Treatises of Government</i> <b>Rousseau</b> : <i>Of the Social Contract</i>	W 11/8
	(C) <b>Rawls</b> : A theory of justice	F 11/10
Assignment	<b>Quiz #4 due online</b>	S 11/12

#### (5) LOGIC AND REASONING

Weeks 12-13 Logic and Reasoning	(C) <b>Cahn</b> : Necessary and sufficient conditions	M 11/13
	(C) <b>Hempel</b> : Scientific inquiry	W 11/15
	<b>Kuhn</b> : Excerpts from <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i>	F 11/17
	<b>Gould</b> : Excerpts from <i>The Lying Stones of Marrakech</i>	M 11/20

**Nov. 22 – Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Break**

## (6) THE BIG PICTURE

<i>Week 14</i> <i>Faith</i>	(C) <b>Scriven</b> : Faith and reason	M 11/27
	<b>Flew, Hare, and Mitchell</b> : A symposium on theology and falsification 📖	W 11/29
	<b>Clarke</b> : Excerpts from <i>Profiles of the Future</i> <b>Shermer</b> : <a href="#">Shermer's last law</a> 📖	F 12/1
<i>Week 15</i> <i>Meaning</i>	(C) <b>Taylor</b> : The meaning of life	M 12/4
	(C) <b>Wolf</b> : Meaning in life <b>Movie in class</b> : "The Inner Light"	W 12/6
	<b>Rorty</b> : Who are we? <b>Le Guin</b> : The ones who walk away from Omelas	F 12/8
<i>Assignment</i>	<b>FINAL EXAM IN CLASS</b>	M 12/11