

Introduction to (Western) Philosophy

SECTION

PHIL 100 A,
Winter 2024

INSTRUCTOR

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(they/them)

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OFFICE LOCATION

M396 Savery Hall

OFFICE HOURS

MW, 4-5 pm

DESCRIPTION

What is philosophy, anyway? In this introductory course, we aim to figure that out by getting our hands dirty and doing it. We will explore traditional and contemporary responses to questions that have kept folks across generations up at night, including: Should you believe what you hear? What do we know (if anything)? What does it mean to have a mind? Are our best scientific theories true descriptions of the world? We conclude by reflecting on what philosophy has been in the past and what we want it to be going forward.

REQUIRED TEXT

(PE) *Philosophy for Everyone* (2 ed.). Chrisman, M., & Pritchard, D. (Eds.). Routledge, 2017.

GOALS

- **Know** some traditional answers to persistent questions in Western philosophy.
- **Do** philosophy with a variety of tools, such as dialogue, argument, analysis, and storytelling.
- **Feel** the desire to know the answer to a philosophical question and the satisfaction of providing an answer of your own.

COURSE AT A GLANCE

DATE	SECTION	CORE READINGS
0. What is philosophy?		
1/4	0.1. Defining it	PE Ch. 1
1/9	0.2. Is there a “right way” to think?	Dotson (2012), “How is this paper philosophy?”
1. Centering values		
1/11	1.1. Positionality and virtues	Rachels & Rachels (2019), <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , Ch. 12
1/16	1.2. Ethics of care	Driver (2007), <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> , Ch. 9
1/18	1.3. Rule-based ethics	Rachels & Rachels (2019), <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , Chs. 8, 10
1/23	1.4. The law and ideal theory	PE Ch. 3; Mills (2005), “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology”
1/25	1.5. Liberation	Beauvoir (1949), <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , excerpt
2. Doubting productively		
1/30	2.1. Doubt and anger	PE Ch. 4
2/1	2.2. Pragmatism	Rorty (1991), “Solidarity or Objectivity?”
2/6	2.3. Testimony	PE Ch. 5, Táiwò (2020), “Being-in-the-Room-Privilege”

2/8	2.4. The aims of science	PE Ch. 8
2/13	2.5. What science means to us	Relativity of simultaneity handout
3. Exploring the outer limits		
2/15	3.1. Do we have free will?	PE Ch. 7
2/20	3.2. Does having “free will” matter?	Wolf (1993), <i>Freedom within Reason</i> , excerpt
2/22	3.3. What is it to have a mind?	PE Ch. 6
2/27	3.4. What makes “you” you?	Parfit (2016), “Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons”
2/29	3.5. What is love?	Nozick (1989), “Love’s Bond”
3/5	3.6. Could we travel through time?	PE Ch. 9
4. What should philosophy be?		
3/7	4.1. Salon	Bring your extended abstracts!

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	POINTS	% OF TOTAL
Class reflections	Midnight after class discussion	5 each, 90 total	39%
Short response 1	Midnight, Wednesday, 1/31	30	13%
Short response 2	Midnight, Wednesday, 2/21	30	13%
Extended abstract	Midnight, Wednesday, 3/6	30	13%
Big paper	Midnight, Friday, 3/15	50	22%

PROMPT FOR THE BIG PAPER

1. Identify a question that is important to you.
2. Find three philosophers who try to answer this question. What tools do they use? Do they use them well?
3. What tools do you want to use, and why? What answer to your question (if any) do these tools yield?

AI POLICY

I encourage experimenting with ChatGPT: use it as a conversation partner in a Socratic dialogue, feed it a portion of your draft to help generate ideas on where to go next, or use it to roughly translate a source in another language.

EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

I encourage you to read through the **UW Department of Philosophy’s syllabus supplement** at <https://tinyurl.com/3949zyby>. It has detailed information on the department’s policies on academic misconduct.

If you experience or witness sexual harassment or discrimination, I highly recommend contacting **SafeCampus** by visiting <https://www.washington.edu/safecampus/> or by calling their hotline at **206-685-7233**.

If you need disability accommodation, please let me know as soon as possible; I also highly recommend contacting **Disability Resources for Students (DRS)** at <http://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/>.