

Philosophy 1000-001-2024C

Introduction to Philosophy

Course Prospectus

Course Description:

Philosophers ask difficult questions about the most basic issues in human life: Does God exist? What is real? What can we know about the world? What does it mean to have a mind? Do we have free will? How should we live together? What should we do in response to the moral challenges of our time? This course is an introduction to some of these questions and to the methods philosophers have developed for thinking clearly about them.

- Introductory course (no prerequisites).
- No previous study of philosophy needed.
- Open to all undergraduate students.
- Primarily intended for non-majors in Philosophy.
- Fulfills College Humanities and Social Sciences Requirement (Sector IV).
- Requires student use of Canvas and Zoom.

Course Format: Twice-weekly Lectures
(Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00 p.m.)
Weekly Friday Recitation Sessions

Instructor: [Stephen P. Steinberg, Ph.D.](#),
Lecturer in Philosophy
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Course Goals:

- Develop familiarity with and understanding of major philosophical issues presented in each module of the course.
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate philosophical arguments presented in the weekly readings and lectures.
- Begin to develop the ability to formulate your own philosophic arguments and counter-arguments.

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:
Modules and Topics**

MODULE I: *An Introduction to Philosophy*

- *What Is Philosophy?*
Course Tour
The Defense of Philosophy
Doing Philosophy

MODULE II: **The Philosophy of Religion:**
Can Religious Beliefs Be Rationally Justified?

- **Philosophy of Religion as Introduction to Philosophy**
- **The God of the Philosophers**
- **The Existence of God:**
The Cosmological Argument
The Ontological Argument
The Teleological Argument
The Moral Argument
The Problem of Evil
- **The Ethics of Belief:**
What Does Faith Owe to Reason?
Faith Beyond Reason?

MODULE III: **The Philosophy of Mind:**
What Does It Mean to be Human?

- **Descartes and the Incorporeal Mind:**
“A Thing that Thinks”
- **Distinguishing the Mental and the Physical:**
The Intentionality and Subjectivity of Consciousness
- **“The Hard Problem” of Minds and Bodies:**
How is Consciousness Possible?
- **Embodiment and the Nature of the Self:**
Who/What/Where Am I?
- **Can Computers Ever Think Like Us?**
Is (Human-like) Artificial Intelligence Possible?

**MODULE IV: Human Freedom and Responsibility:
*Are We Free?***

- **Human Freedom in a Deterministic Universe**
- **Moral Freedom and Responsibility**
- **Existential Freedom**

**MODULE V: Political and Social Philosophy:
*How Should We Live Together?***

- **Human Beings in the State of Nature**
- **Human Beings in Society**
- **Human Beings in the State**
- **Toward Perpetual Peace: *Individual Self-Determination, Civic Nationalism, and Cosmopolitanism***
- **Toward Perpetual Conflict: *National Self-Determination, Ethnic Nationalism, and Fascism***

MODULE VI: *By Way of Conclusion...*

- **Proaction, Precaution, and the Dangers of Ideological Thinking**

About this COURSE

Critically engaging the readings, lectures, and recitation discussions are the primary learning modalities in this course, so keeping up with the assigned readings, attending the twice-weekly lectures and weekly recitations, and participating regularly and actively in recitation discussions should be prioritized. There is a lot of reading, and good philosophical reading often requires repeated readings and carefully analyzing and evaluating the arguments presented in what you are reading. (An optional Readings Worksheet will be provided on Canvas to help you do this.)

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENTS

- **Weekly Assignments:**
 - **Assigned readings.**
 - **Attend twice weekly lectures.**
 - **Attend and participate in weekly recitation sessions.**
 - **Posting questions and comments on the weekly Canvas Discussion Forums.**

- **Written Assessments:**
 - **Two mid-term essays** on the course content.
 - **Final essay** formulating a philosophic argument and counter-argument.

ESTIMATED AVERAGE STUDENT WORKLOAD

Approximately 10-15 hrs./wk. (including reading, lectures, recitations, and preparation of student papers). The amount of reading and paper preparation time will vary from week-to-week.

WEEKLY STUDENT SCHEDULE

- **Mondays and Wednesdays:**
Attend the twice-weekly, in-person, lectures with Dr. Steinberg.

- **Saturday to Thursday:**
Critically read and take notes on the weekly assigned readings.

- **Saturday to Thursday:**
Submit questions or comments on the readings and lectures on the weekly Canvas Discussion Forums.

- **Friday:**
Attend and actively participate in the required weekly recitation sessions.

FINAL GRADE COMPONENTS

- 30% - Recitation Participation and Engagement with the Course:** Regular attendance and active participation in weekly recitation discussions and related activities; regular attendance at lectures; keeping up with the assigned readings; and posting questions and comments on the weekly Canvas Discussion Forums.
- 40% - Mid-term essays (20% each):** Two short essays (4-5 pp. or 1000-1250 words each) responding to a question selected from a list of topics.
- 30% - Final Essay:** A final essay (7-8 pp. or 1750-2000 words) formulating a philosophic argument of your own regarding one of the major issues discussed during the semester (selected from a provided list of topics or another topic approved in advance by your TA) and identifying and evaluating possible counter-arguments.

COURSE MATERIALS

The required and recommended texts (new or used) can be purchased or rented online or in-person from the University of Pennsylvania Bookstore, Amazon.com, or other online bookstores using the ISBN #s listed below.

Required Texts:

- *Western Philosophy, An Anthology*, edited by John Cottingham (Wiley-Blackwell, 3rd Edition, 2021, pb.), ISBN: 978-1-119-16572-9.
- **Additional required and recommended readings** distributed as **PDF** files on Canvas.

FUTURE CHANGES

Please keep in mind that it may be necessary to make changes in the course plans described in this Prospectus, either before the start of or during the Fall semester. *All changes will be announced on Canvas.*