

SUMMER SESSION II: Phil 1 - Intro to Philosophy

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COURSE INFORMATION

This course will involve thinking about the central questions of philosophy from a diverse range of perspectives: What is good and right? What should I believe? How can I come to know about the world around me? What exists? How do our words and concepts relate to our beliefs and the world? We will examine issues that cut across the core areas of philosophy (ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and language), and we will develop careful thinking skills along the way to better make sense of our own deeply held beliefs and commitments about how we relate to others, the world, and ourselves.

Target audience: Students at any level of philosophical background, no prior knowledge required

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As with any philosophy course, in addition to learning about different philosophical points of view, this course aims at the development of a number of fundamental thinking and reasoning skills that are highly transferable to thinking and reasoning outside the philosophy classroom:

- Representing clearly and accurately the views or argument of an author,
- Identifying the logical relations between different claims in an argument such as premise-conclusion relations in order to evaluate arguments for validity and soundness,
- Apply abstract philosophical ideas to concrete cases,
- Write clearly and precisely in defense of a particular idea,
- Participate in respectful and critical dialogues about difficult issues,
- Read and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of texts.

This course focuses on **discussion** and **writing**.

- ❖ **Discussion** - The students will spend much of the term in conversation with other students about the readings and their own ideas, presenting to each other in small groups, and collaborating in order to solve, create, and learn together.
- ❖ **Writing** - Totalling at least 10 pages in length or equivalent.

GRADING

45% - (2) Short writing assignments (22.5% each)

25% - (5) Reading discussion entries (5pts each)

30% - Final paper

Short writing assignments (SWAs) - The short writing assignments are your opportunity to practice writing philosophy in preparation for the final paper at the end of the term. In these assignments, you will be asked to concisely and accurately explain the views of a particular

reading of your choice, and then you will critically analyze the reading, totaling 1-2 pages double spaced (about 500 words). Critical analysis can involve a critique, raising a question for the author which was left unconsidered, and it can also involve supporting the views of the author with a new idea or argument. In any case, critically analyzing a paper isn't merely reflecting on why you may agree or disagree with the author, but rather, it is about dissecting their argument or providing alternative arguments that can either support or critique the reading.

Reading discussion entries - At the beginning of every week, you will be required to submit (1) discussion post prior to our first meeting, and (2) responses to other posts from your classmates. Your posts don't need to be complicated or long-winded—you can raise a question based on the reading, or provide your perspective on an idea that you found interesting, difficult, or hard to understand. The question can be a confusion you had, asking for more clarity, or it can be a question that you think the author doesn't answer but is directly relevant to one of their claims, arguments, or conclusions. **Whether you choose to raise a question or give your perspective, you must first try to explain in your own words the idea or argument that you're considering before posing the question or offering your own view.** In your replies, try to provide more substantive comments to your classmates beyond merely agreeing or disagreeing with their thoughts.

Final paper - You will be given a number of prompts to choose from in order to write your final paper, totaling 5-6 pages double-spaced (roughly 1500 words). More details about the assignment will be discussed closer to when the prompts will be given.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module	Topic	Readings	Date
Introduction	Course introduction + Skills day: Reading philosophy / Argumentation	Syllabus + Jim Pryor's guidelines on reading philosophy	Week 1
What can I know? What can I doubt?	Certainty and Skepticism	Alex Worsnip, "The Skeptic and the Climate Change Skeptic"	
How can I learn about the world?	The Problem of Induction	Leah Henderson, SEP Article: The Problem of Induction	Week 2
	The Aims of Science	Friedman, "Explanation and Scientific Understanding"	SWA 1 Due

What can I say?	The Power of Words and Concepts	Fricker, “Hermeneutical Injustice”	Week 3
Can I know what is right?	Moral Intuitions	Nagel, “Right and Wrong”	Week 4
	Knowledge of Morals	Shafer-Landau, <i>The Fundamentals of Ethics</i> Introduction	SWA 2 Due
What should I do?	Individual Moral Agency	Wolf, “Asymmetrical Freedom”	Week 5
What should we do?	Collective Moral Agency	Anne Schwenkenbecher, “Joint Duties and Global Moral Obligations”	
			Finals Week
			Final Paper Due