

PHIL 201: Introduction to Philosophy

Objective: The purpose of this syllabus is to guide the participant in the requirements, demands, logistics and expectations of this course.

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Course Description/Objective

Philosophy concerns itself with fundamental questions about us and our world, such as: What is the meaning of life? Is there a God? What is the nature of reality? Is knowledge possible? This course provides an introduction to Western philosophy from ancient to modern times through examinations of some of the major works that have provided influential and provocative answers to these questions.

Student Learning Outcomes

The student will:

1. Further develop an appreciation for the core issues in philosophy.
2. Further develop the ability to analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments.
3. Further develop the ability to think and write critically and clearly concerning complex issues.
4. Further develop the ability to express ideas and critically evaluate the ideas of others in a constructive way.
5. Learn the basic vocabulary of the subject.

Credit hours: Three semester hours

Course Prerequisites: None

Textbook

Melchert, Norman, *The Great Conversation, Vol. 1: Pre-Socratics to Descartes*. 5th Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. ISBN13: 9780195306804

Completion Time

You should expect to spend as much time on an online course as you do in a face-to-face course. As a rough guide, you should plan to spend six to ten hours per week on this course. The actual amount of time will vary from individual to individual. This estimate includes the time you spend in reading, discussions, and assignments.

You will have access to all course materials from the start of the course to the end. You may look and study ahead, or go back and review, at any time during the course. All assignments, including discussion boards, have set due dates.

You have one year from your date of registration to complete this course. If you are receiving federal or private financial aid, requirements may differ. However, the minimum requirement for course completion, regardless of the number of credit hours, is six weeks. **No student may complete course requirements in less than six weeks.**

It is important to schedule your course study to fit into your academic plan. If you have important deadlines to meet such as graduation, be sure to complete and submit all of your assignments and take the final examination at least five weeks before the credit is needed. It is your responsibility to ensure the credits for this course will apply toward graduation or certification deadlines.

Course Introduction

Philosophy is sometimes seen as wild speculations about unanswerable questions where each opinion or viewpoint is equally acceptable. This view, although shared by many, could not be further removed from the history of philosophy and the ongoing work of philosophers. Philosophy is a discipline with a rigid methodology strongly based on the criticism. For philosophy, criticism has the aim of moving away from error. We subject answers and justifications to criticism in order to see whether they are sufficient grounds to hold such views. Given the essential role of criticism, to engage in philosophy you must have courage; for one needs courage to subject their most precious and central beliefs to criticism.

Philosophy is usually divided into four disciplines: metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and ethics. Metaphysics is concerned with the nature of reality, epistemology is concerned with knowledge, logic is concerned with the construction and evaluation of arguments, and ethics is concerned with moral behavior. But central to all philosophical inquiry is logic; logic is the engine that makes philosophical inquiry run. Logic is the means by which we justify and criticize our conclusions and beliefs.

Logic is concerned with arguments. An argument is a group of statements in which one or more statements provide support or reason to believe a conclusion. That is, philosophers investigate the nature of reality and determine moral behavior by providing reasons to accept a particular conclusion. In the readings for this course, your job is to (1) determine the authors conclusions, (2) determine the premises or reason to believe these conclusions, (3) evaluate the arguments.

For example, suppose you read an article which argues: God exists. Once you understand what the conclusion the author is attempting to persuade you to accept, the next step is to identify the premises. The premises are the reasons to support the conclusion, so ask yourself, “What reason does the author give to support the conclusion that God exists?” Your next step is to evaluate the argument. Is there a reason not to accept a premise as true? Do the premises logically support the conclusions? Is there a better argument to accept a contrary conclusion? Does the argument leave too many important issues unaddressed? As you go through the readings you will improve your ability to identify and evaluate argument. The course is divided into five sections. Each section consists of chapters from the text. When you feel comfortable with each section, you should take the exam. In order to prepare for the exams, each section has several Critical Reading Questions. The key to doing well on the exam is to be able to answer the Critical Reading Questions. You do not need to submit your answers to me, but if you’re unclear about an answer, please contact me and I will provide assistance.

Each chapter in the text is divided into sections. For some of the chapters, you are not expected to read the entire chapter, but only some of the sections. If you are only to read some of the sections, those sections will be labeled in the Critical Reading Questions section of the study guide. For example, Chapter 3 is divided into five sections, but since you will only be tested on the section “The Sophists,” that section is the only one labeled under the Critical Reading Questions of Chapter 3.

Course Instructions:

There are Critical Reading Questions for each section in the study guide. These questions are the best preparation for the exams.

Examinations

The course consists of five exams. These exams will have six short essay questions. Of these six questions, the student will be asked to answer four of them. If more than four are answered, the best four will be used to determine the exam grade. Exams are open book and you may use your notes. The student must complete the exam in one sitting of 90 minutes. The exams are located in the Assessments tab. **Do NOT start the exam until you are ready to take and complete it.** If you access an exam without completing it, you may receive a zero grade.

Grade Distribution and Scale

In alignment with ASC academic policies, no D may apply to a major or minor field.

Grade Distribution

<u>5 Exams</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total Points	500 points

Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points
A	100-90	500-450
B	89-80	449-400
C	79-70	399-350
D	69-60	349-300
F	59-0	299-0