

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHL 100 Y1Y M6-8, W6-9 (Tutorials M or W)

Instructor: Emma McClure, emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca, office hours TBD

Contact Policy: If you email me, please use course code (PHL100) in subject heading. I will reply to emails within 48 hours. If you'd like to speak to me in person, please stop by my office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me.

Course Description:

Philosophy allows us to ask the big questions about our lives and our place in the world: Who are we? How do we know? What could we become? What choices do we have? What do we value? What should we change?

In this course, you'll learn how to answer these questions and how to engage in arguments with people who disagree with you about the answers. We'll be spending time in this course learning how to read complex philosophical texts, how to produce your own writing on these issues, and how to participate in discussions in your daily life. Philosophical argumentation is a skill, but like all skills, you can master it, if you practice.

Course Objectives:

- Learning how to read philosophy: reading for understanding and evaluation
- Learning how to write philosophy: summary, objections, agreement, replies
- Learning how to converse philosophically: convincing, listening, being charitable
- Be introduced to different topics in philosophy: ethics, epistemology, metaphysics

Evaluation:

Tutorials	15%	Weekly
Critical Question 1	5%	May 8
Critical Question 2	10%	May 22
Blog Post	15%	June 5
Final Paper	25%	June 15
Final Exam	30%	TBD

Tutorials are mandatory. You must be enrolled in a tutorial to get credit for the course. You'll be practicing the skills we introduce in lecture, and you'll have the opportunity to discuss course content with your classmates.

The short writing assignments will help you practice the skills you'll use in the final paper.

The final exam is cumulative and will have a combination of short-answer and essay questions.

Required Texts:

All texts will be available on Quercus. You are expected to skim the assigned reading before each class. (You'll be instructed how to skim a philosophical text in the first class.) After class, you should go back and read the text for understanding and evaluation. (Skills you'll learn in the second and third classes).

Each class will require only 10-15 pages of reading, so many of the articles we're reading will be excerpts from longer works.

Class Schedule: (*demarcates in class reading and writing activities)

Week 1. What should we value? (Ethics)

*Reading activities on how to skim and reading for understanding

Class 1: (in class) Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

Class 2: James Rachels, "The Utilitarian Approach"

Virginia Held, "Care Ethics" (excerpts)

Tutorial: *writing activity on summarizing

Assignment due: Critical Question 1, summarize and ask a question about the text

Week 2. What do we know and what don't we know? (Epistemology)

*Reading activities on reading for evaluation

Class 3: Nick Bostrom, "Are you Living in a Simulation?"

Robin Hanson, "How to Live in a Simulation"

Class 4: Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology"

W.E.B. Du Bois, "On Our Spiritual Strivings"

Tutorial: *writing activity on raising objections

Week 3. Who are we? (Metaphysics)

*Reading activities on voice

Class 5: John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (excerpts)

Class 6: Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Being Yourself* (excerpts)

Tutorial: *writing activity on replying to objections

Assignment due: Critical Question 2, summarize, raise an objection, and respond

Class Schedule continued...

Week 4. Who could we become? (Epistemology)

*reading activities on being charitable

Class 7: L.A. Paul, *The Transformative Experience* (excerpts)

Class 8: Rachel McKinnon, "Trans*formative experience"

Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception"

Tutorial: *writing activity on agreeing with a theorist

Week 5. What choice do we have? (Metaphysics)

*reading activities on reading historical texts

Class 9: Pierre Simon Laplace, "A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities"

A. J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity"

Class 10: Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus* (excerpts)

Tutorial: *writing activity on summarizing philosophical texts for a general audience

Assignment due: Blog Post, summarize, agree/disagree with the theorist

Week 6. What should we change? (Ethics)

*reading activities on mapping philosophical debates

Class 11: John Rawls, "Distributive Justice"

Charles Mills, *Black Rights, White Wrongs* (excerpts)

Class 12: Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (excerpts)

Tutorial: *writing activity on essay structure

Assignment due: Final Paper, summarize, agree/disagree, and reply to opponent's objection

Final Exam TBD

Course Policies:

Contact Policy:

You are required to check your university email accounts regularly. All announcements and grades will be posted on Quercus, and papers will be returned over Quercus.

I can be reached at office hours or over email: emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca

If you email me, please include the course code (PHL 100) in the subject line. I will not answer substantive philosophical questions over email. My response time for other emails will be ~24 hours. If you haven't heard back within 48 hours, please email me again to remind me.

Office Hours:

Please feel free to drop by my office hours, or if you are unavailable during that time, email me to make an appointment. You are not bothering me by coming to my office hours. These are times I have set aside so that I can speak with you one-on-one. You can come with particular questions or you can come just wanting to chat about course material, philosophy, current events, graduate school, etc. My biggest regret about my own time as an undergrad was not taking advantage of office hours. Don't be like me! Come to office hours.

Class Attendance and Participation:

This class works best if you come to class and participate in discussion. However, I know that not everyone will be comfortable participating in large groups, so I'll offer many opportunities for small-group participation and in-class writing assignments.

If you know you will routinely have to miss class—due to work, family obligations, accessibility reasons, religious obligations, prolonged sickness, or trauma—please contact me as soon as possible so we can find an alternative method of participation (e.g. over email or via discussions with peers outside of class). Note: If you are a caregiver, you are welcome to bring your infants/children to class with you.

Late Assignments:

I will accept the assignments up to 3 days late (Monday April 7th , 11:59 pm) without penalty, and up to 7 days late (Friday April 12th, 11:59 pm) with a 3% penalty/day. The late penalty can be waived and the deadline extended if you find yourself in exceptional circumstances (due to accessibility reasons, trauma, family problems, etc). Please reach out to myself or your TA if you are struggling to meet deadlines.

Accessibility:

I am happy to provide any accommodations needed to ensure that all materials and activities are accessible to all students. All readings and handouts will be available on Quercus in PDF form, and I will use a microphone during my lectures. Class attendance and late-assignment policies were constructed with an eye towards making this class as accessible as possible. Please let me know if you require any other accommodations, at any point throughout the term. If you know that you won't be able to perform a required activity, we can discuss alternative evaluation schemes.

Mental Health:

Academic work is difficult and psychologically demanding. It's important to work hard and push yourself but it is even more important to be kind to yourself. The University has a number of resources available if difficulties arise:

<http://discover.utoronto.ca/health-wellness>

<http://life.utoronto.ca/get-help/counselling/>

<http://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>

Academic Integrity:

The purpose of the assignments is to improve your skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking. The purpose of grades is to reflect your competency in these skills. Plagiarism undercuts these aims. You have plagiarized if you a) include writing that is not your own AND b) do not cite your sources. I will investigate suspected cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the University of Toronto's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters (available online at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

If you have questions about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from other institutional resources. (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html is a good place to start.)

Writing Help:

Writing a philosophy essay can be difficult. We will spend some time in class and tutorials talking about techniques for good writing and argumentation. More detailed information is available here: <http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>

For in person help—especially with grammar or syntax—make an appointment at the Writing Centre: <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/> The Philosophy Essay Clinic is a particularly helpful resource: <http://philosophy.utoronto.ca/st-george/undergraduate-at-st-george/philosophy-essay-clinic/>

You may also come to my office hours (or make an appointment) to receive advice from me. I will not read full drafts, but I will comment on particular paragraphs or discuss your ideas with you. I can also help you brainstorm ideas if you're having difficulty starting the assignment, or answer questions about the topics we've discussed in class.