

PHIL 22002 – Introduction to Philosophy

Autumn 2021

Mon & Weds 1:30-2:50PM

Green Hall 101

Instructor: Dr. Lawrence Dallman

Email: dallman@uchicago.edu

Office Hours: By appointment, over Zoom.

Course Description

The philosopher Immanuel Kant claims (famously) that philosophy boils down to three questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? He also suggests, however, that these three questions reduce, at bottom, to a fourth: What is the human being? Philosophy, then, is the study of what it is to be a human being. In this general introduction to philosophy, we will examine a variety of efforts made by philosophers, both contemporary and historical, to answer Kant's three questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? We will do this always with an eye to how these efforts contribute to answering Kant's broader question: What is the human being?

Course Materials

There are no textbooks required for this course. All assigned readings will be distributed digitally, in PDF format, via the course Canvas site.

Course Expectations

This is an introduction to the academic study and practice of philosophy. Accordingly, no previous experience in philosophy is required. By the end of the quarter, students will be expected to have learned how to **engage philosophically with the assigned texts and with each other**. This means (1) taking the texts seriously as attempts to get things right about human beings and the world we live in; (2) offering arguments for or against the views defended in those texts, both in class discussion, and in written assignments; and (3) allowing that respectful disagreement, sometimes about sensitive matters like politics or religion, is an essential part of the process. Philosophical discussion only works when everyone involved feels able to contribute their special insights. It is necessary, therefore, that we maintain a civil classroom environment. This means that disparaging remarks, slurs, overt hostility, and verbal bullying will not be tolerated.

Each meeting will be split between instructor-led discussion of assigned materials, and open student discussion. Students will be expected to **complete assigned readings** prior to each meeting. Readings will never exceed 25 pages. Some of the readings will be difficult, requiring close attention. We will discuss strategies for reading philosophical texts in class.

Given the uncertainty relating to the ongoing COVID19 pandemic, **recordings will be made of each meeting**. Students who are unable come to class, especially due to illness or quarantine, will be given access to the recorded discussions for the meetings they miss. However, this is an in-person course, and it is expected that students should attend in-person meetings whenever possible.

Assignment Structure

Students will be expected to **complete six short, written argument reflection assignments throughout the quarter**. An argument reflection will be due each Friday of weeks two, three, four,

five, six, and seven. An argument reflection is a short (2-page double-spaced) analysis of the argument or arguments at work in the philosophical texts we read together. These should be fairly simple to complete, and will become easier over the course of the quarter. We will discuss what is expected in an argument reflection during the first two weeks of class. I will also provide clear and detailed feedback on your first few reflections to guide you in the task of analyzing philosophical arguments.

At the end of the quarter, each student will be expected to **write a final paper**. This will be a medium-length (5-7 page double-spaced) paper in which you either (1) develop an argument against one of the views defended by the philosophers discussed in the course; or (2) present a view of your own on one of the issues we discuss in the course, and develop an argument to support it. I will distribute prompts for the final paper in the seventh week. I will then meet with each of you to discuss ideas for the final paper. There will be no argument reflections during the final two weeks of class, to ensure that you have plenty of time to develop an argument and produce a high-quality final paper.

Grading Policy

Both your argument reflections and your final paper will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each day they are late. Thus, if you turn your work in one day late, the highest grade possible will be an A-. Likewise, if you turn it in two days late, the highest grade possible will be a B+. Your lowest-scoring argument reflection will not count toward your final grade. This means that your final grade for the argument reflection component of the class will reflect only your five best contributions.

Instances of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an F for the class, as well as in disciplinary action, in accordance with the [University of Chicago Student Manual](#).

Here is the breakdown of your final grade: 20% participation; 40% argument reflections (i.e. 8% for each, where the lowest-scoring reflection is not counted toward the final grade); and 40% final paper. Your participation grade will be based on attendance, active participation in class discussions, attentive reading of assigned materials, and responsiveness to instructor feedback (i.e. how well you incorporate feedback on argument reflections and paper proposals into your work).

Course Roadmap

Mon, Sep 27th Meeting 1.1. Outline of the Course

Weds, Sep 29th Meeting 1.2. Philosophy and Doing Philosophy (13 pgs.)

- Edward Craig, "Philosophy" (9 pgs.)
- Olivia Bailey, "But How Do I Participate?" (4 pgs.)

[What can we know?]

Mon, Oct 4th Meeting 2.1. The JTB Account of Knowledge (11 pgs.)

- Plato, Excerpt from the *Theaetetus* (3 pgs.)
- Plato, Excerpt from the *Meno* (2 pgs.)
- Duncan Pritchard, "Some Preliminaries" (6 pgs.)

Weds, Oct 6th Meeting 2.2. Problems with the JTB Account (4 pgs.)

- Bertrand Russell, Excerpt from *Human Knowledge* (1 pg.)
- Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (3 pgs.)

Fri, Oct 8th Argument Reflection for Week 2 Due by 11:59PM

Mon, Oct 11th Meeting 3.1. Sources of Knowledge I: Perception (20 pgs.)

- H. H. Price, "The Given" (20 pgs.)

Weds, Oct 13th Meeting 3.2. Sources of Knowledge II: Testimony (11 pgs.)

- Jennifer Lackey, "Knowing from Testimony" (11 pgs.)

Fri, Oct 15th Argument Reflection for Week 3 Due by 11:59PM

Mon, Oct 18th Meeting 4.1. The Myth of the Given (15 pgs.)

- Morris Cohen, Excerpts from *Reason and Nature* (9 pgs.)
- Marx Wartofsky, "Observation" (6 pgs.)

Weds, Oct 20th Meeting 4.2. The Manifest and Scientific Images (15 pgs.)

- Arthur Eddington, Excerpt from *The Nature of the Physical World* (8 pgs.)
- Donald Marquis, "In Defense of Sir Arthur Eddington" (7 pgs.)

Fri, Oct 22nd Argument Reflection for Week 4 Due by 11:59PM

[What must we do?]

Mon, Oct 25th Meeting 5.1. Normative Ethics I: Consequentialism (21 pgs.)

- Simon Blackburn, "The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number" (6 pgs.)
- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (15 pgs.)

Weds, Oct 27th Meeting 5.2. Normative Ethics II: Deontology (8 pgs.)
▪ Onora O’Neill, “A Kantian Approach to Famine Relief” (8 pgs.)

Fri, Oct 29th Argument Reflection for Week 5 Due by 11:59PM

Mon, Nov 1st Meeting 6.1. Metaethics and the Naturalistic Fallacy (20 pgs.)
▪ G. E. Moore, “The Subject-Matter of Ethics” (20 pgs.)

Weds, Nov 3rd Meeting 6.2. Critique of Morality I: Error Theory (9 pgs.)
▪ J. L. Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” (9 pgs.)

Fri, Nov 5th Argument Reflection for Week 6 Due by 11:59 PM

Mon, Nov 8th Meeting 7.1. Normative Ethics III: Virtue Ethics (17 pgs.)
▪ Aristotle, Excerpt from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (3 pgs.)
▪ Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices” (14 pgs.)

Weds, Nov 10th Meeting 7.2. Critique of Morality II: Genealogy (17 pgs.)
▪ Friedrich Nietzsche, Excerpts from *On the Genealogy of Morality* (17 pgs.)

Fri, Nov 12th Argument Reflection for Week 7 Due by 11:59 PM

[What can we hope for?]

Mon, Nov 15th Meeting 8.1. The Rationality of Faith (22 pgs.)
▪ Lara Buchak, “Can It Be Rational to Have Faith?” (22 pgs.)

Weds, Nov 17th Meeting 8.2. Progress in Religion (16 pgs.)
▪ Ludwig Feuerbach, Excerpts from *The Essence of Christianity* (16 pgs.)

Tues, Nov 23rd

Thurs, Nov 25th – *Thanksgiving Break* –

Mon, Nov 29th Meeting 10.1. Progress in Science (25 pgs.)
▪ C. S. Peirce, “The Fixation of Belief, plus Excerpts” (25 pgs.)

Weds, Dec 1st Meeting 10.2. Progress in Culture (16 pgs.)
▪ Karl Marx, “Estranged Labour” (7 pgs.)
▪ Karl Marx, “Private Property and Communism” (9 pgs.)

Fri, Dec 3rd Final Paper Due by 11:59PM