

Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus

Instructor: Keith Buhler

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Asbury Office Hours: Tuesday, 12-1 (tentative)

Books:

- Jostein Gaardner, **Sophie's World*
- Plato, *Last Days of Socrates*
- Peter Kreeft, *Philosophy 101*
- Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*
- Augustine, *Confessions*

Buy the exact editions in the links only, please, because I assign page numbers *from these editions*. Get physical books, not e-books, unless the cost is prohibitive. New or used are both OK. You may purchase from any online retailer or physical bookstore, but the links provided are from Amazon (I participate in their affiliate program). Other handouts are provided for free online.

Course Description:

This course is an exercise in a different way of thinking: philosophical thinking. Strictly speaking, this is not an “introduction” to philosophical thinking – because everybody already thinks this way *sometimes*. Rather, we will *exercise* it more. We will practice thinking philosophically. The method is to read and discuss philosophical writings and movies. In order to think philosophically, we will practice read, discuss, and write about these texts.

Our topics will be eclectic: origins, myth, Socrates, happiness, evil, the soul, God, and human nature. Some of these questions are more abstract, some are more practical – all of them are windows into a reality beyond the day-to-day.

There are no long lectures; every class period will consist of *dialog* together. Philosophical thinking cannot be programed into you; you must take responsibility for dialoging in class and out of class.

There *are* answers. Philosophy is not just about questions. But there are no *easy* answers. You will be confused, at points. And the answers we will find will only come after hard work. So enjoy the ride. Ask questions. Get frustrated. Doodle. Guess. Take risks.

The ultimate motivation for having the conversation we call philosophy must be that it can make us better. We enter into the Great Conversation with our own, often confused, thoughts. We may learn to love God with our minds. We may become more connected, integrated, thoughtful, reflective human beings. We may become part of the Conversation, and by it be forever changed.

Learning Goals:

- To practice thinking philosophically.
- To understand difficult and complex arguments.
- To become familiar with the thought of Greek and Medieval philosophers such as Plato and Augustine.
- To understand, test, and defend the Christian worldview.
- To reflect on our own lives, thoughts, and actions.
- To become more virtuous, thoughtful, and wise human beings in the pursuit of goodness, truth, and beauty.

Scope and Sequence:

The course is broken into 6 Units of 2-3 weeks each: Origins, Socrates, Forms, Logic, God, and Human Nature. Each unit consists of four components. (1) Reading and daily quizzes, (2) Discussion in class, (3) Writing. Therefore, the best way to earn an 'A' is to read carefully, participate, and write.

Grades:

You will be graded primarily on reading, participation, and papers, plus applicable extra credit.

Assessment category	%
Readings (weekly quizzes)	25%
Participation	25%
Disputation Papers	50%
Extra Credit	0-5% max

I. Outline (Asbury):

The Outline tells you the reading, topic for each day. The outline is *subject to minor changes*.

Unit 1

Week 1 Origins (Faith and Reason, Myth, Holiness)

Jan-10 T Syllabus Day (Jan 10 AU, Jan 23 FPA)

Jan-12 R JP Moreland, "Love your God with all your mind"

Week 2 Myth

Jan-17 T *Sophie's World*, "Garden of Eden, Top Hat, The Myths"

Jan-19 R Genesis (Chps. 1-2); *Sophie's World*, "Natural Philosophers, Democritus, and Fate"

Week 3 Holiness

Jan-24 T *Sophie's World*, "Socrates, Athens, Plato"; Plato, Euthyphro

Jan-26 R Euthyphro Discussion; Kreeft, *Philosophy 101*, (Chapter II, pp. 87-114) "Philosophy Exemplified"

Unit 2

Week 4 Socrates (Philosophy, Dialectic, Death)

(Unit Paper 1 due Tuesday at midnight)

Jan-31 T Plato, Apology - Is Socrates guilty? What is he being accused of?

Feb-2 R Apology Discussion

Week 5 Dialectic

Feb-7 T Kreeft, *Philosophy 101* (13-49) - Why is philosophy misunderstood?

Feb-9 R Kreeft, *Philosophy 101* (50-86) - Why is philosophy happy and death-defying?

Week 6 Death

Feb-14 T Plato, *Phaedo* (116-143) - Was Socrates true to his principles, even in death?

Feb-16 R Plato, *Phaedo* II (116-143) The soul is immortal because opposites come from opposites, and because we remember Equality itself.

Week 7 The Soul

Unit Paper 2, Due Tuesday at Midnight

Feb-21 T Plato, *Phaedo* (143-199) The soul is immortal if it is philosophical because it is more like the Forms than it is like material things.

Feb-23 R *Phaedo* Discussion, Kreeft *Philosophy 101* (131-148)

Week 8 Forms

Feb-28 T Peter Kreeft, “Forms” handout Mar-2 R Forms Discussion (Optional: Read *Sophie’s World* “Major’s Cabin”, “Aristotle,” “Hellenism”, “Postcards”)

Unit 4

Week 9 Logic

Unit Paper 3, Due Tuesday by Midnight

Mar-7 T Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, Introduction, sections 1, 4, and 5; and Chapter I, “Understanding” (Midterms Due) Mar-9 R Kreeft, *Socratic Logic* III, “Material Fallacies”

Break

Mar 13-20 *Easter Break*

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Week 10 Reasoning

Mar-21 T Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, V, “Judgment”, Section 1 and 2 “Judgments, Propositions, and Sentences” and “What is truth?”

Mar-23 R Kreeft, *Socratic Logic* VIII, “Reasoning”; Willard, “Jesus the Logician”

Unit 5

Week 11 Augustine

Unit Paper 4, Due Tuesday by Midnight

Mar-28 T *Confessions* 1 - Augustine and longing for God’s presence. *Sophie’s World* “Two Cultures”

Mar-30 R *Confessions*, 2-3 - Why did Augustine steal the pears? How bad was this sin?

Week 12 Evil

Apr-4 T *Confessions*, 7 - Does evil exist?

Apr-6 R *Confessions* Discussion

Week 13 God

Apr-11 T Aquinas, “Five Ways of Proving God’s Existence” - Can it be proven that God exists? The First Way; *Sophie’s World* “The Middle Ages”

Apr-13 R Aquinas “Five Ways” - The Second, Fourth, and Fifth Ways.

Unit 6

Week 14 2001: A Space Odyssey

Unit Paper 5, Due Tuesday by Midnight

Apr-18 T Read Dargis, “In Defense of Slow Movies”, Watch 2001: A Space Odyssey film - Hal as Friend, Enemy, and Stepping Stone

Apr-20 R Dave as the New Adam

Week 15 Wall-E

Apr-25 T Wall-E as E.T., Hal 9000, and Adam

Apr-27 R Wall-E and Coming Down to Earth

Week 16 Tree of Life

May-2 T Tree of Life as Evolution and Genesis

May-4 R Tree of Life Discussion

II. Policies

Scale

Letter Grade Percentage

A 99%-90%

B 89%-80%

C 79% - 70%

D 69% - 60%

F < 59%

Reading tips

Read ahead. There is a lot of reading but read carefully and slowly as need be; you will get faster, but start slow and careful. Try to read *and understand* the book or essay. Ask yourself: What is the main thesis? Is it true? Take notes. Talk with each other before class. Ask yourselves and each other: What is the main point? What confused me? Come to class with objections, questions, and arguments. More are tips available online.

Quizzes

Short reading quizzes assess that you read the day's text. These are easy points, so be diligent in doing every quiz.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory; we need you here! Roll will be taken each class by marking a 3x5 card. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late will count as an absence.) You may check your absences at any time by requesting to see your card *in person*. I do not email attendance information. Aim for perfect attendance to maximize your learning.

That said, I give 2 personal absences as freebies. These 2 personal absences may be used without penalty for *any reason*, including family visits, sickness, sports, or sleep. For other reasons, you need an excuse. The 3rd unexcused absence will cost a 2% deduction from the semester grade. This continues *per absence*. 6 unexcused absences is a letter grade and 9 will make a passing grade impossible.

- 1 = -0
- 2 = -0
- 3 = -2%
- 4 = -4%
- 5 = -6%
- 6 = -10% (a letter grade)
- 7 = -12%
- 8 = -14%
- 9 = -50%

Participation

The primary competency of this class is philosophical dialog. Hence, you must attend and participate. Class time is primarily focused on discussion of the material for which I expect you to be fully engaged.

To earn participation points, you will voluntarily share your thoughts in discussion at least once per week, and/or respond when called upon. You are not required to write posts on the discussion board online. By default, everyone is an “external processor”.

“*Internal processors*”: Some may wish to opt out of speaking in class and emphasize writing. To earn participation points, you will post class reflections online every week. You may elect to speak in class as well, and may be called upon.

Everyone starts at an 80% (B-) for the participation grade. You will move up or down depending on whether you pay attention and speak at least once per week. (I prohibit the use of electronic devices in class, although laptop users may request permission to sit in the front of class with their computers.) Other discussion ground rules are posted online.

You are responsible to talk in class. Even if you are confused, tired, or unmotivated, I expect you to make yourself participate and engage. Get out of your comfort zone into your growth zone. Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others’ viewpoints, and critique theirs.

We dialog so much because: (1) You must take responsibility for your own learning. (2) We can actually get to know each other. (3) Most people learn (and retain) best in discussion. (4) Philosophy is dialogical.

Critical Readings:

You *may* be assigned a group “critical reading” assignment. Your group must meet *ahead of time* to read and discuss the assignment more thoroughly than your normal reading. You will then summarize the reading, analyze it, and present your own opinions. One or all of you will present your summary to the class. Instructions are posted online.

Unit Papers

Every student will write several Unit Papers. These Unit Papers help you synthesize your own views after doing the readings and listening to lectures and participating in the discussions. Be careful to cite your sources correctly, because I do not tolerate plagiarism. Papers may be receive a letter grade or may be graded pass/fail – so follow the instructions closely. The instructions are posted online.

Extra Credit

Those who opt for extra credit may do so. You may do extra reading, extra writing, extra class preparation, for up to 5% of the semester grade. The normal amount of extra credit awarded is 2%. The only way to earn all 5% is to do multiple types of extra credit and do them well. Full instructions are posted online.

Late Work

In general, I do not accept late work. Plan ahead and do work early before vacations, sports trips, or busy times. Do the quizzes ahead of time to avoid technical difficulties. Valid excuses for turning in papers late include medical or family emergencies, or abnormal technical failures. That said, due dates are not eternal laws; I willing to negotiate within reason. If you are very stressed, or if I have not graded everything yet, we can talk about moving a due date. Just ask.

Miscellany:

1. **Bring your textbook** to every class.
2. **Participate.** Participation is your responsibility; I may or may not call on you. Challenge yourself!
3. **Stay focused.** Do not distract yourself with side conversations, texting, Facebook, or doing anything else in class. Take a short mental break or bathroom break if you need to, but come back.
4. **No smart phones.** No other electronics, laptops, tablets, phones, etc. Unplug, listen and engage. (If you have an important phone call or text, please step outside the class for a moment, then return.)

5. **No laptop/tablets.** Rare exceptions must request permission to use their device. If approved, you must sit in the front row.
6. **Be respectful of others:** Pay attention when a neighbor is talking. No teasing. Don't pack up too early – 1 minute before the end of class is fine.
7. **Contact me.** The best method is to chat before/after class. Second best is email or Canvas message; I read every email but may not respond to every email. If you need a response, and I haven't responded within three (3) business days, email again with the subject "nudge". (Please use `keith.buhler@uky.edu`.)
8. **Contact.** For short, quick questions, use Twitter (`keith_buhler`)
9. **Email.** You are expected to have an active e-mail account that you check regularly, and to check "news" or "announcements" section on Canvas (or Discovery, etc.). Section related announcements will be made on this platform and/or via e-mail (e.g. if I am sick, pointers for home work, change in due dates).
10. **Accommodations.** Disabilities can be accommodated. Make sure you are properly registered with the Disability Resource Center.
11. **Plagiarism.** Do not plagiarize. If I detect plagiarism, I will contact you. The assignment will receive a zero, and disciplinary action may follow. It may jeopardize your standing in the class. If you forget to quote a source, that's still plagiarism. Also, if you intentionally take anyone else's work or offer your work to anyone else (under whatever auspices). You'll submit your papers to SafeAssign to help avoid accidental plagiarism. Don't even think about stealing someone else's thought/work. For more information, refer to academic integrity documents like this one.
12. **Enjoy yourself.** We are not merely solving abstract puzzles here, but digging deeply into human thinking in a way that could change your life forever. The more you and your fellows allow yourselves to acquire a "taste" for the material, the more inclined you will be to give it the real effort required to master it.