

## Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus

### Introduction to Philosophy, Syllabus 2017

**Instructor:** Keith Buhler

**Contact:** Canvas.

**Teacher Talk:** Thursday, 11:00-11:30am CT

#### Books:

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

#### Handouts (provided)

- Augustine, *Confessions*
- Peter Kreeft, Socratic Logic\*

Buy the proper ISBNs 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 dialogging 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, Sequence, and Grades:

The course is broken into 6 Units of 2-3 weeks each: Origins, Socrates, Forms, Logic, God, and Human Nature. Each unit consists of three 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.

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:

The outline tells you the reading due each day, the topic. The outline is *subject to minor changes* for weather, sicknesses, travel, etc. The online version is always up to date.

## Unit 1 Origins

### Week 1 – Faith and Reason

Jan-24 T Syllabus Day

Jan-26 R JP Moreland, “Love your God with all your mind”

### Week 2 – Myth

Jan-31 T *Sophie's World*, “Garden of Eden, Top Hat, The Myths”

Feb-2 R Genesis (Chps. 1-3); *Sophie's World*, “Natural Philosophers, Democritus, and Fate”

### Week 3 – Holiness

Feb-7 T *Sophie's World*, “Socrates, Athens, Plato”; Plato, Euthyphro

Feb-9 R Euthyphro Discussion; Kreeft, *Philosophy 101*, (Chapter II, pp. 87-114) “Philosophy Exemplified”

## Unit 2 Socrates

### Week 4 Philosophy

(Unit Paper 1 due Tuesday at 10:00pm CT)

Feb-14 T Plato, Apology - Is Socrates guilty? What is he being accused of?

Feb-16 R Apology Discussion

### Week 5 – Dialectic

Feb-21 T Kreeft, *Philosophy 101* (13-49) - Why is philosophy misunderstood?

Feb-23 R Kreeft, *Philosophy 101* (50-86) - Why is philosophy happy and death-defying?

### Week 6 – Death

Feb-28 T Plato, *Phaedo* (116-143) - Was Socrates true to his principles, even in death?

Mar-2 R Plato, *Phaedo* II (116-143) The soul is immortal because opposites come from opposites, and because we remember Equality itself.

## Unit 3 The Soul

### Week 7 – The Soul

Unit Paper 2, Due Tuesday at 10:00pm CT

Mar-7 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.

Mar-9 R *Phaedo* Discussion, Kreeft *Philosophy 101* (131-148)

## **Week 8 – Forms**

Mar-14 T Kreeft, “Forms” handout

Mar-16 R Forms Discussion (Optional: Read *Sophie’s World* “Major’s Cabin”, “Aristotle,” “Hellenism”, “Postcards”)

## **Unit 4 Logic**

### **Week 9 – Three Acts of the Mind**

Unit Paper 3, Due Tuesday by 10:00pm CT

Mar-21 T Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, Introduction, sections 1, 4, and 5; and Chapter I, “Understanding”

Mar-23 R Kreeft, *Socratic Logic* III, “Material Fallacies”

### **Week 10 – Reasoning**

Mar-28 T Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*, V, “Judgment”, Section 1 and 2 “Judgments, Propositions, and Sentences” and “What is truth?”

Mar-30 R Kreeft, *Socratic Logic* VIII, “Reasoning”; Willard, “Jesus the Logician”

## **Unit 5 Medieval Philosophy**

### **Week 11 – Augustine**

Unit Paper 4, Due Tuesday by 10:00pm CT

Apr-4 T *Confessions* 1 - Augustine and longing for God’s presence. *Sophie’s World* “Two Cultures”

Apr-6 R *Confessions*, 2-3 - Why did Augustine steal the pears? How bad was this sin?

### **Week 12 – Evil**

Apr-11 T *Confessions* 4-6 - Why does Augustine leave the Manicheans? Apr-13 R *Confessions* 7 - Does evil exist?

**Apr 17-21 Easter Break**

### **Week 13 – God**

Apr-25 T *Confessions* 8-9 Why does Augustine become a Christian?

Apr-27 R *Confessions* 10-12 How does Augustine interpret Genesis?

### **Week 14 – Proving God**

Unit Paper 5, Due Tuesday by 10:00pm CT

May-2 Aquinas, “Five Ways of Proving God’s Existence” - Can it be proven that God exists? The First Way; *Sophie’s World* “The Middle Ages”

May-4 R Aquinas “Five Ways” - The Second, Fourth, and Fifth Ways.

## **Unit 6**

### **Week 15 –**

May-9 T Hume I  
May-11 R Hume II

### **Week 16 –**

May-16 T Hume III  
May-18 R Hume IV

### **Week 17 –**

Term Paper Due Tuesday by 10:00pm CT  
May-23 T Dawkins I May-25 R Dawkins II

### **Week 18 – Tree of Life**

May-30 T Gospel of John  
Jun-1 R Gospel of John

## **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 & Participation**

Attendance is strongly encouraged. The primary competency of this class is philosophical dialog. Class time is primarily focused on discussion of the material for which I expect you to be fully engaged. 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.

To earn participation points, you will voluntarily share your thoughts in discussion at least once per week, and/or respond when called upon. If you do not talk in class, you must post reflections online every week. 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.

*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.

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. Other discussion ground rules 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 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.

## Miscellany:

1. **Bring your textbook** to every class. Reference it in the discussion. Be specific.
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. **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.
5. **Contact me.** The best method is to chat is a Canvas message; I read every message but may not respond to every email. If you need a response but I haven’t responded within three (3) days, send a message again with the subject “nudge”.

6. **Email.** You are expected to have an active 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).
7. **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.
8. **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.