

Course Information

Course Number: PHIL 1301
Course Name: Introduction to Philosophy
Section: TBD
Semester: TBD
Time: Asynchronous
Location: Asynchronous
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Information

Instructor: Justin Andrew Hill, M.A.
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Office Hours: F, 3p-4p, via Zoom at TBD

Date Modified: July 26, 2025

Communication Expectations

Email or Canvas are preferred. Canvas messages will send me extra notifications, so they may be faster. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but please allow up to 2 business days for a response (i.e., 48 hours, not including weekends; e.g., I will respond to an email received at 1pm on Friday by 1pm on Tuesday).

Course Description

This course surveys writings across the historical traditions of Ancient philosophy, Modern philosophy, American pragmatism, and 20th-century Continental philosophy. Philosophers include Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Mill, Bergson, James, Dewey, Sartre, Deleuze, Nancy, and Massumi. Themes include eidetic intuition, metaphysics, normative meta-ethics, virtue, deontology, utilitarianism, the good life, rationalism, empiricism, idealism, materialism, dualism, monism, pluralism, Enlightenment, skepticism, pragmatism, aesthetics, existentialism, phenomenology, transcendence, and immanence.

Student Resources and Basic Needs

Students are humans first. To learn effectively you must have basic security: a roof over your head, a safe place to sleep, enough food to eat, and other necessary external goods. If you or another student you know are having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me or use the campus resources available.

Course Requirements

- Webcam-Recorded Timed Essay Exams (4)
Respondus Monitor; limited access to digitally annotated PDF primary sources.
(40%; see below)
 - Unit 1: Intuitionism
 - Unit 2/3: Ancient / Modern Philosophy
 - Unit 4: American Pragmatism
 - Unit 5: Continental Philosophy (Final)
- Primary Sources Preparation
Canvas Studio; watch video lectures reading/scaffolding primary sources.
(20%; see below)
 - Watch video lectures explaining and working through the assigned PDF readings.
Graded (15%; see below)
 - Annotate digital PDFs with notes from video lectures **for use during exams.**
Extra Credit (10%; see below)
 - Reference guiding questions to facilitate an understanding of the text's structure.
- Weekly Video Discussion Board Exercises
Canvas Studio; 1-2 minute webcam-recorded videos.
(40%; see below)
 - Weekly activities/exercises, such as answering guiding questions to study for exams; some of these will include brief oral responses, recorded and shared with classmates.
Graded (40%; see below)
 - Responding to classmates' video responses is welcome but ungraded so as to maintain organic discussion. As a student, I never benefitted from mandatory discussion boards.
Ungraded
- Extra Credit
Perusall/Kami; PDF Annotations; physical texts will not be allowed during the essay exams.
(7.5%; see below)
 - Annotations Check: If 2/3 of annotations are completed per unit, then +10% on the exam.
 - Set Sweep: If all annotation bonuses are earned across the semester, +6% in the course.

Webcam-recorded timed essay exams (45 minutes), with access to your digital Perusall/Kami annotations, will open on Monday the week on which they are assigned and will close end of day Sunday, at 11:59pm. Tech issues are expected to be tested and problem-solved beforehand. Only one tech make-up is excused.

Reading List

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, excerpts from Books I, II, and VIII.
Bergson, Henri. *Introduction to Metaphysics*.
Deleuze, Gilles. "Immanence: A Life."
———. "Zones of Immanence."
Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First, Second, and Third Meditations.
Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, Ch. 1-3.
James, William. "What Pragmatism Means."
Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: *What is Enlightenment?*"
———. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and First Section.
Massumi, Brian. *Politics of Affect*, excerpt from Ch. 1 (pp. 1-10).
Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Being Singular Plural*, Preface and excerpts from "Being Singular Plural."
———. "Of Divine Places."
Plato. *Apology*.
———. *Republic*, excerpts from Books I, II, IV, VI, and VII.
Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics*, excerpt from Part III.
Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions*.

All excerpted readings are posted as PDFs to Canvas → Files → Readings and should be followed along with and annotated on Perusall as you watch the audiovisual readings/lectures. Check the course schedule for weekly reading assignments. Expect 25-40 pages of reading per week. Use the assigned video lectures to help work through the assigned readings, since I pre-structure the texts and dissect paragraphs as we go along in the videos together. Use the guiding questions and exemplary annotations to access the sources.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be given the opportunity to:

- 1) (*Knowledge Outcomes*)
 - a) become familiar with fundamental philosophical concepts;
 - b) become familiar with major philosophical traditions;
 - c) develop the ability to critically interpret difficult philosophical texts;
 - 2) (*Skill Outcomes*)
 - a) develop the ability to reason and write critically about difficult philosophical texts and issues;
 - b) develop the ability to teach themselves from source texts without background knowledge;
 - 3) (*Value Outcomes*)
 - a) reflect critically about ethical, political, aesthetic, and metaphysical (meta-ethical) issues;
 - b) reflect critically about the value of knowledge and truth;
 - 4) (*Citizenship and Professionalism Outcomes*)
 - a) develop professionalism regarding punctuality, communication, and deliverables;
 - b) develop commonly agreed upon citizenship virtues and characteristics; and
 - c) develop the ability to understand contradictory perspectives and harmonize stakeholders.
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Grading Policy

Please refer to the current University Catalog for additional information regarding grades and course withdrawal policies. For this course, (i) weekly video discussion board exercises, such as oral responses to the main idea or a choice of guiding questions, are graded on pass/fail for accuracy; and (ii) webcam-recorded timed essay exams are graded according to the following scale (adapted from Dr. Robin James):

| | |
|------------|--|
| A (90-100) | Thorough and critical understanding of the issues – subtly summarizes the major issues while also offering insightful interpretation. Outstanding argumentation, organization, and writing (grammar, vocabulary, etc.). No misunderstandings. Clearly above and beyond expectations. <i>Excellent presentation of key ideas.</i> |
| B (80-89) | Above average understanding, not as creative or exegetical as an A level product, nor does it capture all the ‘complexities’ of the issues. A thorough recapitulation of the text and/or discussion. Adequate argumentation, organization, and writing, with few presentational awkwardnesses. <i>No misunderstandings of key ideas.</i> |
| C (70-79) | Basic understanding, marked by <i>one or more significant errors or mis-readings</i> . Confused, disorganized writing that may address lots of information, but does not thematize or interpret it. Does not respond directly to all components of prompt. |
| D (60-69) | Very basic grasp of the material, presented in a highly confused manner. |
| F (50-59) | No comprehension of the material, and/or an utterly incomprehensible paper. |
| M/INC (0) | Missing/Incomplete. All earnest efforts will receive a minimum grade of 50. |

This class follows a 1000-point total structure, but I round up such that 890+ points is an A, 790-889.9 points is a B, 690-789.9 points is a C, etc. The rounding is a hard cutoff. Note also there are 1100 points possible in the class, out of 1000, meaning there is an additional 10% worth of extra credit in the course.

The following point breakdown will be used to calculate your numerical grade:

| | |
|--|----------------------------|
| {1100 points possible w/ extra credit} | 1100 points / 1000 points |
| Webcam-Recorded Timed Essay Exams: | 400 points / 1000 points |
| Unit 1: Intuitionism | 100 points |
| Unit 2/3: Ancient / Modern Philosophy | 100 points |
| Unit 4: American Pragmatism | 100 points |
| Unit 5: Continental Philosophy (Final) | 100 points |
| Primary Sources Preparation: | 200 points / 1000 points |
| Assigned Readings and Video Lectures | 200 points |
| Weekly Video Discussion Board Exercises | 400 points / 1000 points |
| Oral Responses to Guiding Questions | 400 points |
| Extra Credit: | 100 points / {null} points |
| Digital Annotations (+10% per exam) | 40 points |
| Annotations Set Sweep (if earned all four) | 60 points |

I reserve the right to curve exams but am more likely to create an extra credit debrief targeting specifics.

Grading Feedback Expectations

I will return grades via Canvas within three weeks after the exam date, with specific itemized feedback.

Graded Attendance, Participation, and Preparation

Ungraded

- Attendance
 - This class is asynchronous, but modules open on a unit-by-unit basis as we progress.
 - Attendance is not graded, but watching weekly video lectures is graded as preparation.
 - Oral responses to guiding questions are required weekly and graded pass/fail on accuracy.
- Participation
 - Taking **notes on digital Perusall PDF readings for reference during timed exams**.
 - **Annotating**, underlining, and highlighting digital PDF readings, not just for help during your exam, but for **extra credit; two-thirds** of the unit must be marked substantively to earn the +10% extra credit on the exam. I will grade these at the end of the exam week; annotation edits will close with the Respondus Monitor exam, at end of week, 11:59pm.
 - **Discussion board written responses** to classmates' oral responses to guiding questions.

Graded

- Weekly Video Discussion Board Exercises (Participation) — **40% of overall grade**.
 - **Weekly video discussion board activities and oral responses** to guiding questions, **pass/fail on accuracy**. You won't be able to see other students' discussion board video responses to the guiding questions until you post your own. After you post it, you can watch your classmates' responses and learn from how they are approaching the text. You can comment on their videos, but the comments won't be graded as part of the rubric. Civility and respect are non-negotiable expectations.
 - Canvas Studio Video Lectures Watched Completely (Preparation) — **15% of overall grade**.
 - **Digital readings will be necessary for the videos, studying, and exams and are thus considered preparation but are ungraded**. By participating during the videos lectures / audiovisual readings, you prepare for exams (hence the convoluted bullet structure here).
 - **Guiding questions** and responses studied with videos; see above, "Weekly Exercises."
 - **Audiovisual readings watched** to facilitate your thinking and written argumentation.
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Late Work and Make-Up Work Policy

If something comes up that will interfere with your engaging class, **especially** for any of our four exam dates, please let me know sooner rather than later. However, if there is a present emergency, please deal with that first and contact me later — you need not, for example, email me from the emergency room.

Missing exams may be taken late, until the end of Week 14, but will be graded down by three letter grades (e.g., -30%). Missing exams taken late but before Week 10 will only be graded down by two letter grades (e.g., -20%), to encourage catching up early. Note only the first two exams can be made up at this reduced rate. Exams submitted as make-up work for an excused absence can of course be taken without deduction.

Tech issues are expected to be tested and problem-solved beforehand. Only one tech make-up is excused.

Oral responses submitted as weekly video discussion board exercises cannot be turned in late *except in the case of an excused absence*, due to community respect for other students and the flow of class.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI use is not permitted in this course. AI use will result in an “M/INC” grade designation of 0 points, as this course is intended to teach you to think for yourself and to communicate your thinking without aid. Did you know AI causes (often rural) water depletion at its industrial data centers? Your brains can utilize 16 ounces of water (the amount consumed per query/prompt) better than the AI data centers can do so.

Course Schedule

| Date | Topics | Essential Readings | Assignments Due |
|--|--------|---|---|
| Unit 0: Introduction <i>1-1.5 weeks</i> | | | |
| W0 mm.dd-dd | | Meet Your Professor. Syllabus. | |
| W1 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., cont. Icebreakers / Meet Your Classmates. | |
| | | Ibid., cont. Finish MYP, Syllabus, and MYC. | |
| Unit 1: Intuitionism <i>2 weeks</i> | | | |
| W2 mm.dd-dd | | Bergson, “Introduction to Metaphysics,” in <i>The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics</i> . | |
| | | Ibid., cont. | |
| W3 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., cont. | |
| | | Unit 1 Exam, Intuitionism. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD. | Unit 1 Exam, 45min, due End of Week. |
| Unit 2: Ancient Philosophy <i>2 weeks</i> | | | |
| W4 mm.dd-dd | | Plato, <i>Apology</i> . | |

| Date | Topics | Essential Readings | Assignments Due |
|----------------|--------|---|---|
| | | Ibid., <i>Republic</i> , Book I, 327a-327c (Context; Setting; Listening); Book II, 357a-361e (Ring of Gyges); and Book IV, 427a-445a (The Just City and the Tripartite Soul). | |
| W5 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., Book VI, 506d-511e (Analogies of the Sun and the Divided Line); and Book VII, (Allegory of the Cave). | |
| | | Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I Ch. 6-8 (The Good Life); Book II (Virtue Ethics); and Book VIII, Ch. 3 (Three Types of Friendship). | See W8 below for the combined Ancient and Modern written exam. |

Unit 3:
Modern
Philosophy
3 weeks

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| W6 mm.dd-dd | | Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , First (Doubt) and Second (Cogito) Meditations. | |
| | | Ibid., Third Meditation (Clear and Distinct; Cartesian Circle; Proof for God's Existence). | |
| W7 mm.dd-dd | | Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part III. "Concerning the Origin and Nature of the Emotions," Preface, Definitions, Postulates, and Propositions 1-3, in <i>The Complete Works</i> , pp. 277-82. Massumi, <i>Politics of Affect</i> , Preface, pp. vii-xii, and Ch. 1 excerpt, pp. 1-12. Deleuze, "Spinoza, The Velocities of Thought," Seminar 15, 1981, pp. 1-10. (Optional). | |
| | | Kant, "An Answer to the Question: <i>What is Enlightenment?</i> ," pp. 1-5. Ibid., <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface, 1 st Section, pp. 1-17. (Deontology) | |
| W8 mm.dd-dd | | Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , in <i>The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill</i> , Ch. 1-2, pp. 95-115. | |
| | | Unit 2/3 Exam, Ancient / Modern Philosophy. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD. | Unit 2/3 Exam, 45min, due End of Week. |

Unit 4:
American
Pragmatism
4 weeks

| Date | Topics | Essential Readings | Assignments Due |
|-----------------|--------|---|---|
| W9 mm.dd-dd | | James, "What Pragmatism Means." | |
| | | Dewey, <i>Art as Experience</i> , "The Live Creature," pp. 1-19. | |
| W10 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., cont. | |
| | | Dewey, <i>Art as Experience</i> , "The Live Creature and 'Ethereal Things,'" pp. 20-35. | All Missing Written Exams Due for -20% |
| W11 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., cont. | |
| | | Dewey, <i>Art as Experience</i> , "Having an Experience," pp. 36-59. | |
| W12 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., cont. | |
| | | Unit 4 Exam, American Pragmatism. Opens Monday; closes Sunday, EOD. | Unit 4 Exam, 45min, due End of Week. |

Unit 5/Final:
Continental
Philosophy
3 weeks

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|---|---|
| W13 mm.dd-dd | | Sartre, <i>Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions</i> , "Introduction: Psychology, phenomenology and phenomenological psychology," pp. 1-14. | |
| | | Ibid., "I. The Classic Theories" and "II. The Psychoanalytic Theory," pp. 15-33. | |
| W14 mm.dd-dd | | Ibid., "III. Outline of a Phenomenological Theory" and "Conclusion," pp. 34-64. | |
| | | Ibid., cont. | All Missing Written Exams Due for -30% |
| W15 mm.dd-dd | | Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life," in <i>Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life</i> , pp. 25-32. Ibid., "Zones of Immanence," in <i>Two Regimes of Madness</i> , pp. 266-69. | |
| | | Nancy, <i>Being Singular Plural</i> , Preface, "We Are Meaning," "People Are Strange," and "Gaining Access to the Origin," pp. xv-21. Ibid., "Of Divine Places," in <i>The Inoperative Community</i> , pp. 110-50. | |

Final Exams
0.5-1 weeks

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|--|----------------------------|
| W16 mm.dd-dd | Reading Day | No class due to Reading Day. Office Hours by appointment via Zoom (please utilize!). | |
| | | Unit 5 Exam, Continental Philosophy (Final). See University Finals Schedule for dates. | Unit 5 Exam, 45min. |

Key Concepts

Intuitionism

- Analysis vs. Intuition (Bergson)
- Concrete Duration (Bergson)
- Listening (Bergson; Plato; Nancy)
- Unity vs. Multiplicity (Bergson; Plato; Aristotle; Dewey; Sartre; Deleuze; Nancy)

Ancient Philosophy

- The Socratic Method (Socrates; Plato)
- The Philosophical Life / the Good Life (Socrates; Plato; Aristotle)
- Natural Virtue and Human Virtue (Plato; Aristotle)
- Ring of Gyges (Plato)
- The Tripartite Soul (Plato)
- Theory of Forms (Plato)
- Analogy of the Sun (Plato)
- Analogy of the Divided Line (Plato)
- Allegory of the Cave (Plato)
- Henosis (Plato; Descartes)
- Idealism (Plato)
- Materialism (Aristotle)
- Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)
- The Mean (Aristotle)
- Habituation of Virtue (Aristotle)
- Three Types of Friendship (Aristotle)

Modern Philosophy

- Cartesian Skepticism (Descartes)
- Evil Deceiver (Descartes)
- Cogito ergo sum (Descartes)
- Clarity and distinctness; the natural light (Descartes)
- Objective and Formal Reality (Descartes)
- The Cartesian Circle (Descartes)
- Rationalism vs. Empiricism (Descartes; Spinoza, Kant; Bergson; Deleuze; Plato; Aristotle; Sartre)
- Affect (Spinoza)
- Historicity and Affective History (Spinoza)
- Deontology (Kant)
- Good Will (Kant)
- Duty (Kant)
- Respect (Kant)
- Categorical Imperative (Kant)
- A Priori vs. A Posteriori (Kant)
- Consequentialism (Mill)
- Hedonism (Aristotle; Mill)

- Utilitarianism (Mill)
- Intrinsic Goods versus Instrumental Goods (Mill)
- Means and Ends (Aristotle; Kant; Mill)
- Enlightenment (Kant)
- Transcendence (Kant; Deleuze)

American Pragmatism

- American Pragmatism (James; Dewey)
- Genetic Theory of Truth (James)
- Functionalist Account of Meaning (James)
- Embodied Cognition (Dewey)
- Embodied Monism (Dewey)
- Esthetic Experience (Dewey)
- Recognition vs. Perception (Dewey)
- Experience as Emotion (Dewey)
- Reason as Impulsive Grace (Dewey)
- Primacy of Sense to Language (Dewey)
- Primacy of the Arts to Science (Dewey)
- Meaning as Unified Perception of Causation (Dewey)
- *An Experience* (Dewey)
- Qualitative Languages (Dewey)

Continental Philosophy

- Phenomenology (Sartre)
- Existentialism (Sartre)
- Psychoanalysis (Sartre)
- Peripheric vs. Psychic Theories of Emotion (Sartre; James)
- Eidetic Intuition (Bergson; Plato; Descartes; Sartre)
- Emotion as Transformation (Sartre)
- A Life (Deleuze)
- Transcendental Field (Deleuze)
- Immanence (Deleuze)
- Transcendental Empiricism (Bergson; Deleuze; Nancy)
- Transcendent (Deleuze; Sartre)
- Singularity (Deleuze; Nancy)
- Univocity of Being (Deleuze)
- Being-With (Nancy)
- Being Singular Plural (Nancy)
- The Origin of Being-With (Nancy)
- Meaning as Circulation (Nancy)
- Co-Originary Spacing (Nancy)
- Destitution (Nancy)
- Exposure (Nancy)
- Divine Winking (Nancy)
- Primacy of Difference (Deleuze; Nancy)

Normative Ethics

- Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)

- Deontology (Kant)
 - Utilitarianism (Mill)
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Important Dates

- **Holidays and No-Class Days**
 - *{per semester and institution}*
 - *Beginning of Week 16: Reading Day*
 - **Grade-related Dates (Written Exams)**
 - *End of Week 3: Intuitionism Written Exam*
 - *End of Week 8: Ancient / Modern Philosophy Written Exam*
 - *End of Week 12: American Pragmatism Written Exam*
 - *End of Week 16: Continental Philosophy Written Exam (Final Exam; No Make-Ups)*
 - **Grade-related Dates (Make-Ups)**
 - *End of Week 10: All Missing Written Exams Due for -20%*
 - *End of Week 14: All Missing Written Exams Due for -30%*
 - **Finals Week and Commencement**
 - *End of Week 15: Last Day of Class*
 - *Beginning of Week 16: Reading Day*
 - *End of Week 16: Final Exam*
 - *After Week 16: Commencement Weekend*
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Learning Resources

My Office Hours are listed above; you are always welcome to ask me questions; I encourage discourse. You are welcome to stop by to ask about assigned readings, continue class discussions, get feedback on essays and term papers in advance, get clarity with the assigned reading, or meet my German Shepherd (either digitally or outside on-campus, if feasible).

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy \(SEP\)](#) is better than AI (*use Ctrl+F to find keywords instead of AI*). This is a great secondary source if you are struggling with the primary sources assigned in class. You can also use the SEP to help identify promising secondary sources, topics for term papers, and the broader discourse, context, and interpretation around assigned primary sources, both for reading and for writing.

{per institution; tutoring and/or writing centers}

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus and modify the information given above at any time during the semester. All changes will be announced via the LMS, which should hopefully forward to your email. In transparency, I will never modify the syllabus in such a way as to *increase* the workload or expectations.

University Policies

{per institution}
