

PHIL 11: Introduction to Philosophy

Spring 2021

Course Overview:

This course provides an introductory survey of classic and contemporary approaches to some central topics in several key sub-disciplines of philosophy: epistemology and aesthetics, philosophy of social thought and ethics. Some of the questions we will explore include: What is the value of philosophy? What can we know? What types of knowledge are there? What is art? Is there a particular space to display it? What is labor in the capitalist system? What is Oppression? What is considered to be a morally good or bad action?

Teaching Team: This class is only possible because of the amazing teaching team that supports it. Due to the size of this class, **please contact your TA first regarding your grade or to receive an extension for an assignment. Keep in mind that extensions are reserved for extraordinary cases. Allow at least 48 hours for an answer to your email.**

Instructor: Mariana Imaz-Sheinbaum

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Teaching Assistants:

Ghoncheh Azadeh, gazadeh@ucsc.edu, sections C, M, N

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James Read, japread@ucsc.edu, sections S, T, U

Thomas Rule, trule@ucsc.edu, sections, B, G, L

Course Policies and Requirements

Lectures will be completely asynchronous, but sections will be synchronous and mandatory. Switching sections must be done officially via the registrar (registrar website: <https://registrar.ucsc.edu/soc/enrollment-information.html>; instructions for switching sections: <https://registrar.ucsc.edu/faqs/students/enrollment/edit-enrollment.pdf>).

Assignments

Attendance and active participation, 10%: Sections will start on week 1. Your attendance and participation will count towards your grade. Because lectures will be completely asynchronous, it is important to attend sections because they are the space where you can actually discuss and engage

with the content of this class. In order to receive 100% in participation you need to attend and actually participate in at least 7 sections. This means that you can miss up to 3 sections throughout the quarter. Missing more than 3 section will start to impact your grade.

Reading quizzes, 10%: Reading philosophical texts is a skill that you will be cultivating in this course. Assigned readings are not long but they demand attention. To evaluate your understanding of the readings, questions will be provided on Canvas after every unit is concluded. There will be a total of 5 reading quizzes.

Essay 1, 10%: Writing a philosophical essay requires practice. In this first essay you are going to submit a paper where you explain, **in your own words**, one philosophical argument that you have found engaging so far. Giving an overview of the text **is not** what this essay is about. You need to reconstruct an argument and the main philosophical claims that sustain such argument. (500 words) **Due date April 25th.**

Essay 2, 30%: In this essay you are going to **1)** reconstruct a second philosophical argument. Choose a different one than the one you chose for essay 1! Please make sure that you incorporate the feedback that your TA provided. **2)** You are going to evaluate the philosophical position that you chose. A simple “I agree” or “I disagree” is not enough here. You need to provide your own arguments in favor or against the philosophical view that you are reconstructing. In other words, you will have to discuss why the philosophical argument that you reconstructed is well or poorly reasoned (why is it a good or bad argument? what is it accomplishing? what is it missing?) (750 words) **Due date May 16th.**

Final essay, 40%:

Instructions: Respond to the prompt below in 1500-2100 words. Be sure to include a thesis and an argument supporting it.

You can construct your essay from the following list of works of art (if you wish to choose a different one you need to get approval from your TA). **IMPORTANT:** This is NOT an essay about art interpretation. The artwork is a mere launching point for you to think about a concrete action that you can demonstrate that you understand some ethical theories and how to apply them.

Final papers will be graded without comments. If you'd like feedback on your final paper, please contact your TA before the paper deadline to request comments.

The due date for this assignment is June 7 at 11:59pm

Prompt: Analyze an ethical problem or concern depicted in a work of art* from the perspective of (i) Bentham (ii) Kant or (iii) Virginia Held (choose two of these authors)

1) You will first, identify ONE ethical problem or concern that the work of art is depicting and explain it. In other words, you will identify an action or a dilemma that is presented or depicted in the artwork. Be clear about who is performing that action or who is stuck in the dilemma. (Do so in no longer than 150 words)

Example: Ursula LeGuin's text describes a beautiful town where people are happy and flourishing. But an interesting dilemma arises. That is, the happiness of this town is

based on the suffering of a kid. This is problematic because it makes us question if this situation is right or wrong. Is it justifiable that one person suffers for the happiness of the majority?

Example: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz describes a specific type of oppression that women suffer from men. One of the issues that she talks about is censorship. One can argue that censorship is a moral dilemma because it silences people's opinions and reassesses one and only one way of seeing the world. We can agree that this is, in principle wrong, but why?

Example: Banksy's image shows a man erasing prehistoric paintings. It also seems that this man is simply doing his job, it does not strike us as an illegal or vandalistic act. It seems to be a policy and the man is simply obeying such policy. The idea of having a policy that encourages people to erase history seems fundamentally wrong, but why?

Example: Diego Rivera's mural shows an array of issues that seem to be morally problematic. One of the things that he shows in this painting is forced labor. Forcing people to do unpaid work under the conditions that the mural is depicting is morally wrong, but why?

2) Second, pick two authors from this list: (1) Bentham (2) Kant (3) Held, and briefly explain IN YOUR OWN WORDS their theory of ethics (Do not cite outside sources). This is basically giving a **reconstruction** of the main points that the authors give to say that an action is right or wrong.

3) Third explain what those two authors would say about the action or dilemma you identified in the artwork. Explain what they would say one at a time (separate paragraphs or sections for each). Here are some guiding questions: Would they say that the action is right? Why? Would they say it is wrong? Why? Do they agree or disagree with each other?

In other words, based on the ethical theories you described in part 2, you will now apply those to the specific problem or dilemma that you have identified in part 1 of your essay.

4) Finally, explain what YOU think is the right or moral thing to do regarding the action, or dilemma you identified in the artwork. Your response should engage with the explanations of the two authors you picked. Here are some guiding questions: what are they getting right? What are they getting wrong? Why? Basically, what you are doing here is **evaluating** the theories and giving your own opinion on the ethical issue that you have discussed.

*Here are the works of art that you can use:

- *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* by Ursula K LeGuin (short story uploaded on canvas under "files")
- Poem "You foolish men" by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
<https://poets.org/poem/you-foolish-men>

- Banksy's image:



- Diego Rivera's Mural "The Conquest of Mexico"



Any plagiarized work will result in a failing grade for this course.

Here are some resources to help you write a good philosophical paper:

[How to Write a Philosophy Paper Shelly Kagan Department of ...oyc.yale.edu › sites › default › files › philosophy-paper](#)

[A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper - Harvard ...philosophy.fas.harvard.edu › files › phildept › files › b...](#)

Grading Scale

A 100-95%, A- 94-90%, B+ 89-85%, B 84-80%, B- 79-75, C+ 74-70%, C 69-65%, C- 64-60%, D+ 59-55%, D 54-50%, F 49-0%; CR > 65%.

Important dates

Add/Drop/Swap Deadline: April 26th 2021.

Deadline to Change Grade Option: May 28th 2021.

Withdraw Deadline: April 19th 2021.

Final Paper Deadline: June 7th 2021.

Course Schedule

Note: in order to follow the lectures, participate in discussions and successfully completing assignments, required readings must be completed before coming to discussion section on the date they are listed:

Week 1 March 29th to April 2nd:

- Introduction
- Bertrand Russell "The value of philosophy"

Quiz 1 must be completed by Sunday April 4th @ 5pm.

Unit 1: Philosophy of Knowledge: AKA Epistemology

Week 2 April 5th to April 9th:

- Plato, "Theaetetus"

Week 3 April 12th to April 16th

- Descartes, Meditations on first philosophy, I, II and IV.
- José Medina, "Active Ignorance, Epistemic Others, and Epistemic Friction."

Quiz 2 must be completed by Sunday April 18th @ 5pm.

Unit 2: Aesthetics

Week 4 April 19th to April 23rd:

- Alva Noë, "See me if you can" and "Why is Art so boring"
- Arthur Danto, "The Artworld"

Week 5 April 26th to April 30th:

- Nick Riggle, "Street Art."
- Andrea Baldini, "Street Art: a reply to Riggle"

Quiz 3 must be completed by Sunday May 2nd @5pm.

Unit 3: Philosophy of Social Thought

Week 6 May 3rd to May 7th:

- Karl Marx, "Estranged Labor."
- Marilyn Frye, "Oppression"

Week 7 May 10th to May 14th:

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Ch. 1 "The body of the condemned."
- Angela Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?* Chapter 1: Prison Reform or Prison Abolition.

Quiz 4 must be completed by Sunday May 16th @5pm.

Unit 4: Ethics

Week 8 May 17th to May 21st:

- Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, selections.
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals*, p.49-76.

Week 9 May 24th to May 28th:

- Virginia Held, *Feminist Ethical theory*.

Week 10 May 31st to June 4th:

- Discuss final essay prompts

Quiz 5 must be completed by Sunday May 30th @5pm.

University Resources

DRC Accommodations

All students are welcome in this course! If you require accommodations, please submit your Academic Access Letters to the instructor as soon as possible. The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations, or any other disability-related matter, contact the instructor and/or the DRC office, located in Hahn 125 or at 831-459-2089 or drc@ucsc.edu.

Academic Dishonesty

All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community **are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own**. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC. In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the Academic Integrity page at the Division of Undergraduate Education.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831)

502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential, counseling

support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office,

(831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.

Faculty and Teaching Assistants are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Office should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Counseling and Psychological Services

All currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students at the University of California at Santa Cruz are eligible to utilize on-campus counseling services. Situational and developmental problems frequently interfere with academic performance. Please make use of the campus resources available to support you. Services are confidential (831) 459-2628. <http://caps.ucsc.edu/counseling/index.html>