Université d´Ottawa / University of Ottawa

Thursdays 19-22h (MHN 033)

Winter 2025

Scientific Thought and Social Values, PHI2394 B- Syllabus\*

*The duty of the man who investigates the writings of scientists, if learning the truth is his goal, is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads, and ... attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination of it, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or leniency.*

— Hasan Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen), 965c – 1040c

Instructor: Dean Wm. Lauer, Ph.D.

Office: DMS 8146 hours: Thursdays, 14h45 – 16h

E-mail: dlauer@uottawa.ca

Additional Help:

○ PHI2394 A teaching assistants: office hours beginning week 41

+ Sara Elianne Fortin (MA, Concordia) [sfort091@uottawa.ca](mailto:sfort091@uottawa.ca) office hours by apoointment

+ André Lavoie-Weddell (MA, Ottawa) [alavoiew@uottawa.ca](mailto:alavoiew@uottawa.ca) office hours by apoointment

Content/Subject Matter:

Examining the questions of science and value through the history of ideas, we follow the university’s description of this course – “The nature of scientific thought and the relationships between science and culture, religion, politics, technology and society at large.”

Teaching Method:

The teaching format for a large course such as this will consist of lectures and documentary videos. Student participation, while not required, is welcomed.

Aristotle tells us that all philosophy (knowledge of the world) begins with a sense of wonder. As such, fostering an interest in the ideas presented is a better strategy for learning and success than studying for a grade.

Course Structure/Exams/Marking:

●Exam I: January 30th = 25% / We cannot coach students during the exams.

●Exam II: March 6th = 25% / Cheating leads to automatic failure of exam.

●Final Exam: To be announced = 50% / Use your own words; don’t copy text.

Missed quizzes are excused only following university policy - http://www.uottawa.ca/academic-regulations/exams.html or a statutory declaration of illness.

All evaluations will be multiple choice and short answer format at minimum. Marked quizzes can be reviewed in rare cases by the teaching assistant who marked your paper. As per the Faculty of Arts regulations “[t]he revised grade can be higher than, lower than or equal to the grade submitted for review.” Unfortunately, there are no extra credit possibilities.

Observe:

I do not answer inquiries that are redundant of material covered in class or that is written here on the syllabus.

Unfortunately, I am not well skilled at information technology. If you are having questions in this area see:

 Brightspace support by phone: 1-866-811-3201

Quizzes and final exam can be written in English or French.

Respect

Note that the Ontario Human Rights Code provides that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to goods, services, facilities, housing, contracts and employment as well as membership in trade or professional associations and unions without discrimination because of ‘’Race, Ancestry, Place of origin, Colour, Ethnic origin, Citizenship, Creed, Sex, Sexual orientation, Gender identity, Gender expression, Age, Record of offence (in employment only), Receipt of public assistance, Novital status, Family status, Disability’’.

Indigenous affirmation:

ANISHINÀBE

Ni manàdjiyànànig Màmìwininì Anishinàbeg, ogog kà nàgadawàbandadjig iyo akì eko weshkad. Ako nongom ega wìkàd kì mìgiwewàdj.

Ni manàdjiyànànig kakina Anishinàbeg ondaje kaye ogog kakina eniyagizidjig enigokamigàg Kanadàng eji ondàpinangig endàwàdjin Odàwàng.

ENGLISH

We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their longstanding relationship with this territory, which remains unceded.

Course Calendar:

Unless noted by a URL or hyperlink, all readings are from the Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Anthology or The God Delusion, both on the course Brightspace site. All page numbers here refer to the original book, not the .pdf.

Thursday, 9 January – Course overview: historical connexion of philosophy and science

Thur. 16 Jan, – Abbas El-Zein “[As engineers, we must consider the ethical implications of our work](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/05/engineering-moral-effects-technology-impact)” + Chapter 1 Plato, On Dialectic and “Technē” pg. 9 - 18

Thurs. 23 Jan. – Ch. 3 Wolfgang Schadewald, The Greek Concepts of “Nature” and “Technique” pg. 25 -31 + Ch. 4 Francis Bacon, “On the Idols, the Scientific Study of Nature, and the Reformation of Education” pg. 33 - 46

Thurs., 30 Jan. – EXAM I

Thurs., 6 Feb. - Ch. 6 Auguste Comte, “The Nature and Importance of the Positive Philosophy” pp. 54 – 67 + Ch. 7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “On the Sciences and Arts” pp. 68 – 71

Thurs., 13 Feb. - Steven Pinker, “The dangers of worrying about doomsday” <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-dangers-of-worrying-about-doomsday/article38062215/> + Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Otto Neurath, “The Scientific Conception of the World . . .” pp. 101 – 110 + video (The Vienna Circle)

Thurs., 20 Feb. – Reading Week!

Thurs., 27 Feb. – EXAM II

Thurs., 6 March – Karl Popper "[Science as Falsification,"](https://staff.washington.edu/lynnhank/Popper-1.pdf) 1963 + Edward Said, “Knowing the Oriental” begin at pg. 39 (from Orientialism)

Thurs., 13 Mar. – Film, Guns, Germs, and Steel I + Ch. 44 Lynn White, Jr., “Cultural Climates and Technological Advance in the Middle Ages” pg. 511 - 522

Thur., 20 Mar. – Film, Guns, Germs, and Steel III + Garrett Hardin, ”[The Tragedy of the Commons](https://iseethics.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/hardin-garrett-the-tragedy-of-the-commons.pdf)”

Thurs., 27 Mar. Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion (pp. 214-226): “[Does our moral sense have a Darwinian origin? - A case study in the roots of morality](https://novxistnkrumaistforum.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/richard_dawkins_-_the_god_delusion.pdf)” + Ch. 49 Daniel C. Dennett, “Consciousness in Human and Robot Minds” pp. 588 – 596.

Thurs., 3 April. – Artificial Intelligence: Vanity Fair, 2023“[Future Tense](https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/2023/10/future-tense)” + Ch. 54 Michel Foucault, “Panopticism” pp. 654 – 667

FINAL EXAMINATION – Noncumulative: Date to be determined

Nota bene:

Academic Regulations

* Can be found here: <https://www.uottawa.ca/administration-and-governance/policies-and-regulations>
* On Courses: <https://www.uottawa.ca/about/academic-regulation-8-courses>

Beware of academic fraud!

Academic fraud is an act by a student that may result in a false evaluation (including papers, tests, examinations, etc.). It is not tolerated by the University. Any person found guilty of academic fraud will be subject to severe sanctions.

Here are some examples of academic fraud:

* Plagiarism or cheating of any kind;
* Present research data that has been falsified;
* Submit a work for which you are not the author, in whole or part;
* Submit the same piece of work for more than one course without the written consent of the professors concerned.

Please consult [this webpage:](http://web5.uottawa.ca/mcs-smc/academicintegrity/students.php) it contains regulations and tool to help you avoid plagiarism.

An individual who commits or attempts to commit academic fraud, or who is an accomplice, will be penalized. Here are some examples of possible sanctions:

* Receive an “F” for the work or in the course in question;
* Imposition of additional requirements (from 3 to 30 credits) to the program of study;
* Suspension or expulsion from the Faculty.

You can refer to the regulations on [this webpage.](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic-regulations/academic-fraud.html)

Prevention of Sexual Violence

The University of Ottawa does not tolerate any form of sexual violence. Sexual violence refers to any act of a sexual nature committed without consent, such as rape, sexual harassment or online harassment. The University, as well as student and employee associations, offers a full range of resources and services allowing members of our community to receive information and confidential assistance and providing for a procedure to report an incident or make a complaint. For more information, visit [www.uOttawa.ca/sexual-violence-support-and-prevention](http://www.uOttawa.ca/sexual-violence-support-and-prevention).

Student Services

[Academic Writing Help Centre](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/)

At the AWHC you will learn how to identify, correct and ultimately avoid errors in your writing and become an autonomous writer.

In working with our Writing Advisors, you will be able to acquire the abilities, strategies and writing tools that will enable you to:

* Master the written language of your choice
* Expand your critical thinking abilities
* Develop your argumentation skills
* Learn what the expectations are for academic writing

[Career Services](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/careers/)

Career Services offers various services and a career development program to enable you to recognize and enhance the employability skills you need in today's world of work.

[Counselling Service](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/personal/)

There are many reasons to take advantage of the Counselling Service. We offer:

* Personal counselling
* Career counselling
* Study skills counselling

[Access Service](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/access/)

The Access Service acts as intermediary between students, their faculty and other University offices to ensure that the special needs of these students are addressed and that the best possible learning conditions are being offered.

Note that the University of Ottawa is affiliated with [AERO](http://alternativeresources.ca/Aero/Public/WelcomePage.aspx) and [ACE](http://www.ocul.on.ca/node/2192) services for the adaptation of accessible academic materials for students with perceptual disabilities. If you have any questions, please contact the[Accessibility Librarian](mailto:libadapt@uottawa.ca) or the [Access services](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/en/access/) for textbooks.

About the Instructor

**Dean Lauer** is a contract professor of philosophy and environmental studies. I began post-secondary studies at Ohio University in the charming town of Athens, where I studied biology and Scandinavian literature. I received my Ph.D. from the University of Ottawa in 2003. My areas of interest and publications are in phenomenology (esp. Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) and the history of ideas. I was a Fulbright fellow and guest researcher at the University of Oslo (*Senter for útvikling og miljø*). In 2007, I was appointed visiting assistant professor at Saint Lawrence University. I began teaching regularly at the University of Ottawa in 2011.