

# Welcome to Philosophy

*Philosophy 101 - Class 01*

**Brian Weatherson** 

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*University of Michigan*

August 29, 2023

# Welcome

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## Where Are You?

*Philosophy 101 - Introduction to Philosophy*

- You're in Philosophy 101 - Introduction to Philosophy.
- And you're in Auditorium D, in Angell Hall.
- I hope that's your intent this morning.
- And I hope you'll be here most every morning, Tuesdays and Thursdays, through the end of term.

## Lecturer

*Brian Weatherson*

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# Discussion Section Leaders

Alison Weinberger and Fatimah Alhawary

They're here and I can introduce them in person.

# This Course

## Course Overview

Four major parts

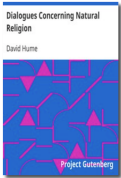
- 1. Critical Thinking
- 2. Bertrand Russell's 1912 book *The Problems of Philosophy*.
- 3. David Hume's book, published in 1779, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.
- 4. Contemporary work on climate change.

## Free Books

Really, no money at all

The two books are freely available through [Project Gutenberg](#).

**Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion by David Hume**



Download This eBook

Format	Size			
<a href="#">Read this book online: HTML5</a>	242 kB			
<a href="#">Read this book online: HTML (as submitted)</a>	237 kB			
<a href="#">EPUB3 (E-readers incl. Send-to-Kindle)</a>	144 kB			
<a href="#">EPUB (no images)</a>	147 kB			
<a href="#">Kindle</a>	282 kB			
<a href="#">older Kindles</a>	273 kB			
<a href="#">Plain Text UTF-8</a>	232 kB			
<a href="#">More Files...</a>				

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion at Project Gutenberg

## Links to Books

*Just for people reading at home*

Project Gutenberg links to the books:

- [The Problems of Philosophy](#)
- [Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion](#)

Brian's online versions of the books.

- [The Problems of Philosophy](#)
- [Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion](#)

## Canvas

*Where you find everything*

This course, like pretty much all courses, has a canvas site.

Go to [canvas.umich.edu](https://canvas.umich.edu), and you should find it easily enough.  
(UPDATE 8/29 8:30am: You cannot in fact find it easily enough, especially without internet.)

It has the **syllabus**, links to the readings, these slides (after class).

## Assessment

*What You Have to Do*

1. Do the reading before lecture, attend lecture, and answer iClicker questions during lecture. (Some of these will be full points for any answer, as the aim is to get a sense of the room; questions about the reading will typically be marked correct or incorrect.)
2. Attend discussion sections, and participate fully. (The discussion section leader will tell you more about what they are expecting.)
3. Do three short assignments during the early part of term.
4. Write two longer essays during the later part of term.

## Books

*Also on Canvas*

Under 'Files' on Canvas, I've put links to both

- The Project Gutenberg versions of the books; and
- The versions that I made which I think are easier to read, but your mileage may vary.

## iClicker

### *One way to engage in class*

This class will use **iClicker** in class. This will take attendance, but also let us run **polls** and **quizzes**.

Note that a **poll** is where I just want to know what you think, you'll get full marks for any answer.

A **quiz** is where I want you to get the right answer. This will primarily be about the reading.

You need to set up the iClicker software (which is free for UM students) asap.

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## Asking Questions

This isn't just a scripted performance from me. You can stop me and ask questions.

In fact, does anyone have questions so far?

Still, this is primarily about me talking. The discussion sections should be, if all goes well, primarily about you talking.

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## Canvas Chat

### *Yet Another Engagement Mechanism*

There is also a group chat facility, helpfully called 'Chat', in Canvas.

During class, the discussion section leaders will monitor this, answer questions that come up, and let me know if lots of people have the same question.

I've tried using these before and, to be honest, it hasn't been a great success. But if there is something that you want to bring up, and you'd rather not raise your hand in a large auditorium, that's an option.

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# What is Philosophy

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## The Big Question

*That a 101 course should answer*

For courses that are not offered at most high schools, like sociology, linguistics, or **philosophy**, it's common in 101 to say what we are, and what you get out of a course like this.

Unfortunately, this is a little harder in philosophy than some other disciplines.

I've heard even of courses that organise their entire introductory course around the question "What is Philosophy?"

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## Philosophy as Theory

*What does that mean*

In many subjects at UM, there is be some course with the term 'theory' or 'theoretical' in the title, or which says in the introduction that it is taking a more theoretical approach to questions.

Philosophy is what is covered in all those courses.

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## The Big Question

*With an answer*

I'm not going to do that for two reasons.

1. It sounds really dire.
2. There is a simple answer - philosophy is theory.

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## Philosophy as Theory

*What does that mean*

That implies that there are people doing philosophy across a whole range of departments at UM, or any other university.



One exciting thing about being at UM is that people tend to do philosophy very well across the university, something that isn't guaranteed even at good universities.

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


LING 210 - Introduction to Linguistic Analysis  
Winter 2023, Section 001

Instruction Mode: Section 001 is  In Person (see other Sections below)


Subject: Linguistics (LING)  
Department: LSA Linguistics

**Atlas.**  
See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.  
[Atlas Course Profile](#) 

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Details

**Credits:** 3  
**Requirements & Distribution:** SS  
**Waitlist Capacity:** 99  
**Repeatability:** May not be repeated for credit.  
**Primary Instructor:** Merchant, Doug  
**Start/End Date:**  **Full Term** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below)  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

Description



Languages are rule-governed systems. The kind of rules that interest linguists are not prescriptive ones such as Don't split infinitives, but rather concern the systematic patterns that language users unconsciously know as part of their linguistic competence. For example, as a speaker of English, you know how to order words in a sentence to convey a particular meaning, and can understand and create novel sentences you've never heard before; you also know how to change how people interpret your sentences with seemingly subtle changes in pitch, and you know how to appropriately modify your speech for different social situations.

This course in linguistic analysis introduces students to the methods and theoretical principles used by linguists to render language users' implicit knowledge of their language explicit. Drawing on data from English and many other languages of the world, we will investigate the sounds used in language, both how they are produced and perceived (phonetics), and how they pattern into syllables and words (phonology). We will study word structure (morphology), sentence structure (syntax), and the relation between these structures and the construction of meaning (semantics). Our goal is to understand the properties shared by all languages, the ways in which languages can differ from each other, and how languages change, with the broader aim of understanding the formal structure of human language – how language “works.”






HISTORY 329 - Social Science Topics in History  
Winter 2023, Section 001 - Histories of Race and Law

Instruction Mode: Section 001 is  In Person (see other Sections below)


Subject: History (HISTORY)  
Department: LSA History

**Atlas.**  
See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.  
[Atlas Course Profile](#) 

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Details

**Credits:** 3  
**Requirements & Distribution:** SS  
**Waitlist Capacity:** unlimited  
**Repeatability:** May be elected five times for credit.  
**Meet Together Classes:** NCISCI 360 - Soc Sc Jr Sem, Section 004  
**Primary Instructor:** Krimsky Nora  
**Start/End Date:**  **Full Term** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below)  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

Description

The United States is a deeply unequal society divided and segregated along lines of race despite supposed guarantees to legal equality and appeals to colorblindness. This course will take a critical look at this tension in American law and society and consider the active role of law in constructing and maintaining racial categories, inequality, and segregation in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century United States. We will examine major developments in the relationship between race and law since the end of the Civil War, placing contemporary crises of criminalization, incarceration, immigration enforcement, and disenfranchisement in deep historical context. These major developments include the transformation of criminal justice and law enforcement during Reconstruction, the construction of the Jim Crow regime, the role of racism in transforming ideas about criminality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the roles of criminalization, policing, and incarceration in US colonialism and imperial expansion, immigration restriction and control, the criminalization of social movements and other forms of protest, and the racialization of the Wars on Crime and Drugs. We will use theoretical frameworks from multiple disciplines to understand these developments, including Critical Race Theory, racial formation, and relational racialization. We will also consider the roles of race and law in shaping various other axes of power over time, including gender, labor, citizenship, and empire. Over the course of the term, we will aim to excavate a usable past that can inform and shape current movements for justice, restoration, and equality.



Linguistics 210, which covers theoretical perspectives on language, and overlaps with what we teach in philosophy of language

History 329, on theoretical frameworks on history, and overlaps with what we teach in moral and political philosophy






FTVM 375 - Television Theory and Criticism  
Winter 2023, Section 001

Instruction Mode: Section 001 is  In Person (see other Sections below)


Subject: Film, Television, and Media Std (FTVM)  
Department: LSA Film, Television, and Media

**Atlas.**  
See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.  
[Atlas Course Profile](#) 

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**Credits:** 3  
**Requirements & Distribution:** LUWR  
**Waitlist Capacity:** unlimited  
**Consent:** With permission of instructor.  
**Lab Fee:** 35.00  
**Advisory Prerequisites:** FTVM 150 or FTVM (IAC) 236  
**Repeatability:** May not be repeated for credit.  
**Primary Instructor:** Kigerman, Mark William  
**Start/End Date:**  **Full Term** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below)  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

Description

This course examines theoretical and critical approaches to the study of television and delves into questions attending representational norms, narrative design, cultures of reception, and institutional practice. Since this is a LUWR course, students are expected to refine their critical writing skills along the way.

**Course Requirements:**  
Students will be assessed based on reading quizzes, discussion posts, participation, 2 papers, and 1 exam



**Intended Audience:**  
Undergraduates interested in the study of television and FTVM majors.

**Class Format:**  
Lectures twice weekly. 2 to 3 hours of asynchronous screenings per week.






MATH 296 - Honors Mathematics II  
Winter 2023, Section 101

Instruction Mode: Section 101 is  In Person (see other Sections below)


Subject: Mathematics (MATH)  
Department: LSA Mathematics

**Atlas.**  
See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.  
[Atlas Course Profile](#) 

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**Credits:** 4  
**Requirements & Distribution:** BS, QR1  
**Other:** Honors  
**Waitlist Capacity:** 30  
**Advisory Prerequisites:** MATH 295.  
**Other Course Info:** W.  
**BS:** This course counts toward the 60 credits of math/science required for a Bachelor of Science degree.  
**Repeatability:** May not be repeated for credit.  
**Meet Together Classes:** MATH 295 - Honors Math II, Section 001  
**Primary Instructor:** DeBacker, Stephen M  
**Start/End Date:**  **Full Term** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below)  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

Description

**Background and Goals:** Math 295-296-395-396 is the most theoretical and demanding honors calculus sequence. The emphasis is on concepts, problem solving, as well as the underlying theory and proofs of important results. It provides an excellent background for advanced courses in mathematics. The expected background is high school trigonometry and algebra (previous calculus is not required, but is helpful.) This sequence is not restricted to students enrolled in the LSA Honors program. Math 295 and 296 may be substituted for any Math 451 requirement. Math 296 and 395 may be substituted for any Math 517 requirement.

**For more information on this course, please visit the Department of Mathematics webpage**

Film Television and Media 375, on television theory, which overlaps with what we teach in aesthetics

Math 296, a theoretical (and demanding) course, which overlaps with what we teach in logic

### POLSCI 309 - Theoretical Perspectives on Environmental Change

#### Winter 2023, Section 001 - Population, Equity and Environmental Change

Instruction Mode: Section 001 is In Person (see other Sections below)

Subject: Political Science (POLSCI)

Department: LSA Political Science

See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.

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#### Details

**Credits:** 3

**Requirements & Distribution:** SS

**Waitlist Capacity:** 99

**Advisory Prerequisites:** POLSCI 101.

**Repeatability:** May be elected twice for credit.

**Next Together Classes:** ENVIRON 307 - Threats: Peng-Kim Ching, Section 001  
INTLSTO 385 - Int'l Topics in SS, Section 002

**Primary Instructor:** Derek Lisa Jane

**Start/End Date:** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below).  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

#### Description

Population, Equity, and Environmental Change examines contemporary debates over the relationships among population growth, environmental change, and sustainability. Scientists agree that the ecosystems of planet Earth cannot long support the human species at its current levels of consumption. They argue that the human species has made itself a geological force, one whose impact on the planet might be compared to the earthquakes and floods that shaped its topography in prehistoric times. Though there is widespread agreement about the magnitude of this change, there is intense debate about how to characterize the crisis it poses. Some define it in terms of the limits of nature, tarring it a mismatch between available resources and human numbers; it should be addressed as a "population problem." Others define it in political terms as a crisis of distribution and social justice.

**Course Requirements:**  
Grades will be determined on the basis of two short analytic papers (roughly 30%); weekly reading quizzes (roughly 25%); various active learning and "low stakes" writing exercises (roughly 30%); class participation (roughly 15%). The course may include a group project. Readings will be available on Canvas.

**Intended Audience:**  
This course is open to all students. It is useful but definitely not required that students have taken POL 101 prior to enrolling in this course

Political Science 309, theoretical perspectives on environmental change, which overlaps with what we will cover later in this course

## And More

*This could go all day*

There are courses in physics, economics, English literature, gender studies, and many more that are like this.

The philosophy department has faculty cross-listed with law, linguistics, African American studies, Asian Languages and Culture, and so on.

My work overlaps a lot with economics, and that might come through in what I teach here.

### PSYCH 242 - Language and Human Mind

#### Winter 2023, Section 001

Instruction Mode: Section 001 is In Person (see other Sections below)

Subject: Psychology (PSYCH)

Department: LSA Psychology

See additional student enrollment and course instructor information to guide you in your decision making.

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#### Details

**Credits:** 4

**Requirements & Distribution:** ID

**Enforced Prerequisites:** Not available to students who have completed LING 103 (courseID 020035), Topic: Language and Mind,(Topic #6).

**Other Course Info:** Does not count toward the requirements for the Psychology major.

**Repeatability:** May not be repeated for credit.

**Cross-Listed Classes:** COGSCI 200 - Lang and Human Mind, Section 001  
LING 200 - Lang and Human Mind, Section 001  
Bresnan, Jonathan R

**Primary Instructor:**

**Start/End Date:** 1/4/23 - 4/18/23 (see other Sections below).  
NOTE: Drop/Add deadlines are dependent on the class meeting dates and will differ for full term versus partial term offerings. For information on drop/add deadlines, see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and search Registration Deadlines.

#### Description

This course introduces students to the study of language as a window into the human mind. We consider the "cognitive revolution" and the debate between seeing behavior and languages as the object of inquiry to the experimental and theoretical study of the cognitive mechanisms underlying our unique human capacity for language, the exercise of which permeates virtually every aspect of human life, including what you are now doing. In every household, all of the children, barring pathology - but none of the dogs, cats or other organisms (nor the inanimate objects!) - acquire the language signed or spoken by the adults. There is some biological property of humans that makes this feat possible. What do we know when we know a language, and what does it mean to say that humans have an innate capacity for language?

**Class Format:**  
**Waitlist Procedure**  
Students are admitted from the waitlist in order of registration, and overrides will be issued by Linguistics Department staff when spots in the class open. Discussion sections are strictly capped at 25 and cannot be over-enrolled. If you have any questions about the waitlist, please email linguistics-ec@umich.edu.

Psych 242, Language and the Human Mind, an “Experimental and Theoretical Study”. This overlaps with philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, and the first reading is from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

## What is Covered in Theory Courses

*Three Big Topics*

1. Aims
2. Methods
3. Themes

## What is Covered in Theory Courses

### *Aims*

- What are we trying to do in this kind of study?
- What are the practitioners trying to do in the work we're studying, and should they be trying to do that?

The first is more important when theorising about physics, the second when theorising about politics. (I guess both are important in theorising about art.)

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## What is Covered in Theory Courses

### *Methods*

- How do we (or the practitioners) go about achieving those aims?

FWIW, most of the research work I do falls into this category.

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## What is Covered in Theory Courses

### *Themes*

- The more general a question, the more likely it is to turn up in a theory course.
- Theory is when we move from questions about this chemical element, or this painter, to questions about all chemical elements, or all painters.
- And philosophers tend to interact with people in other disciplines most often when they are working at this very general level.

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## Why Philosophy?

### *Why not just have theorists in every other department?*

Because these theoretical debates often turn out to have a lot in common. Knowing something about some of them helps with the other ones.

And there are very general things, especially about the nature of reasoning, but also about the nature of very general things like value, knowledge, existence, causation, etc, that are helpful across the various debates.

And that's what philosophy does.

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## Best Philosophy

*Why not both?*

When I say some course elsewhere 'overlaps' with philosophy, does that mean that you should just listen to us, or that what we do is redundant?

- No, both courses are valuable.
- To do theoretical work on X, it helps to know a lot about X, and a lot about the nature of the theoretical questions involved.
- Different courses, and different profs, will help with each.

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# Parts of Philosophy

## A Brief Guide

*This is mostly so you recognise the words*

I'm going to list eight areas of philosophy that a lot of courses cover.

- Some courses cover things outside this list.
- More commonly, we have courses that cover many parts of this list.

## Important Topics in Philosophy

1. **Ethics** - how to live.
2. **Epistemology** - what we can know, and how to reason well.
3. **Metaphysics** - what the world is like, at a fundamental level.
4. **Political Philosophy** - how to live together.
5. **Aesthetics** - art, beauty, fiction, and related topics.
6. **Philosophy of Mind** - what (human) minds are like.
7. **Philosophy of Language** - how (human) language works.
8. **Logic** - formal theories of implication.

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# History

*Commitment to the record*

As well as these topics, we spend a lot of time in philosophy studying, and archiving, the history of study into them.

In other disciplines this is sometimes offered as a very obscure topic.

In philosophy it's central to the discipline.

# Internal Overlaps

*Courses that cover many parts*

Some philosophy courses look at philosophical topics from a certain perspective, or as they come up in certain contexts. These will cover many of these areas.

- Feminist philosophy courses might look at feminist ethical and political theories, but also feminist approaches to metaphysics, epistemology, and language.
- Philosophy of science courses look at metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical/political questions that arise in science.

# External Overlaps (Very Roughly)

Area of Philosophy	External Discipline
Ethics	Everything
Epistemology	Everything
Metaphysics	Physics
Political Philosophy	Political Science
Aesthetics	Art, Film, etc
Philosophy of Language	Linguistics
Philosophy of Mind	Psychology
Logic	Mathematics

# Ethics and Epistemology

*Why everywhere?*

Because in every discipline you need to think about:

1. How do we find out about the part of the world that we're studying?
2. What should we do with that information?

The first is epistemology, the second is ethics. And they are unavoidable subjects.

## Metaphysics and Physics

*Hang on a second*

Is physics the study of what the world is really like, at the most fundamental level?

Not on most theological pictures.

And in the history of philosophy, metaphysics was more closely connected to theology than to physics, and we'll see that in Hume's *Dialogues*.

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## Metaphysics and Epistemology

*The world is knowable*

Another thing we'll see, and Russell will have a lot to say about this, is the connection between our theories of what the world fundamentally is like, and our theories for how we can know about the world.

A running concern over millennia is that if the world is as it appears, we couldn't possibly know about it. And this leads to some *interesting* metaphysical views.

This will come up in Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*.

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# For Next Time

## Reading

*Yes there's reading*

Read chapter 1 of P. D. Magnus's (freely available) logic text *forall x*.

This is available on Canvas.

We are not doing logic in this course, but we need the basic concepts.

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