

Corning Community College, Fall 2019
Phil 1010 – 002/003: Introduction to Philosophy
MWF 10:45–11:50pm, Room C204

Dr. Cole Mitchell:

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Course Description: This course is an introduction to basic problems and topics of philosophy. Throughout the semester you will be introduced to philosophy's distinctive ways of understanding and thinking about perennial human questions. We will focus primarily on three major areas of philosophy: (1) *epistemology* (which deals with questions of knowledge), (2) *metaphysics* (which deals with questions of existence and the nature of ultimate reality), and (3) *ethics* (which deals with questions of values). One of the main goals of this course is to get you to critically analyze some of life's most important issues. Using selections from primary texts we will look at contemporary and traditional examples of philosophical argument, analysis, and criticism. In reading original selections from Plato, St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and others, you will become acquainted not only with the traditional questions of philosophy but also with the tools and methods of philosophy.

The term “philosophy” itself literally means the *love of wisdom* (etymologically from the Greek *philos* = love and *sophia* = wisdom). Philosophy is a quest for truth and it requires hard work and sacrifice. It can be liberating in that it can free us from prejudices, self-deceptive notions, and unjustified assumptions, but it can also be unsettling in that it asks us to question some of our core beliefs. This will not be an easy semester but if you work hard I believe it will be a rewarding one. The critical thinking skills involved in philosophy are general skills that are applicable in every facet of daily life.

Student Learning Outcomes: In this course students will: (1) Learn how to distinguish the major areas of philosophy (e.g., epistemology, metaphysics, ethics) and develop the ability to identify and critically reason through some of the central questions associated with each; (2) Become acquainted with some historically important philosophers and the main ideas underlying some major philosophical movements and positions; (3) Develop the ability to read texts actively and analyze argumentative passages; and (4) Learn how to apply certain philosophical theories and distinctions to real life questions and issues.

Required Text: Louis P. Pojman and James Fieser, *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Fourth Edition. Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0195311617

<u>Course requirements:</u>	Midterm Exam:	25%
	Final Exam:	25%
	Two papers:	25%
	Quizzes, Attendance, & Participation:	25%

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will be given on **Monday, Oct. 28** during our regular meeting time. It will cover material from the textbook *and* from the lectures. Since the readings are difficult, there will be a lot of important material communicated in class that you will not be able to get from the readings alone. Hence, being in class is important. Except for cases of legitimate emergency, **if you are absent on the day of the midterm you will not be allowed to make up the exam.** If you know ahead of time that you will not be able to attend the midterm you **must** contact me immediately to work out an acceptable alternative. The midterm will include essay, short-answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions.

Final Exam: The final exam will be held during the **Final Exam Week (Dec. 9–14)—actual date and time TBA**. The final exam is not cumulative—it will only cover post-midterm material. Except for cases of legitimate emergency, if you are absent on the day of the final you will not be allowed to make up the exam. Failure to attend the final exam will result in an incomplete or failure for the semester. Be sure to arrive on time for the exam and do not plan trips or vacations that conflict with the final exam date. The exam will include essay, short-answer, multiple choice, and true/false questions.

Two Short Papers: You will be required to write two short papers for this course—roughly 3 to 4 pages each. These will **not** be research papers. You will need nothing but your notes, textbook, and critical thinking skills to do these assignments. The papers will be based on topics covered in class. A list of possible topics/questions will be distributed in class at least one week before the papers are due. The assignments **must be typed, double-spaced, and well organized**. You must make every effort to write in clear, complete, grammatical sentences. Further requirements will be discussed when the paper topics are distributed. If you are absent the day a writing assignment is distributed **you are still responsible for the work**. Being absent is not an excuse. If you miss a class you should email me (or contact a fellow classmate) to see what you missed.

Late papers will be marked down. Failure to hand in one or both of the papers is sufficient grounds for failing the course. These assignments are non-negotiable—to pass the course you must hand in both writing assignments.

Rules of Attendance and Participation: Active, diligent participation in class is absolutely necessary. This course depends on open and ongoing discussion and dialogue. Attached you will find a “**Weekly Reading List**” outlining the schedule of readings. Come to class prepared having critically read and taken notes on all assigned readings. It is recommended that you keep a notebook or journal in order to record questions and observations. It is important that you have read this material *before* we discuss it in class! If you regularly come to class unprepared it will negatively affect your grade. You should also get the contact information of a classmate right away so that you can obtain notes/information in case you miss a class. You can also email me for any missed handouts and/or new assignments.

You will be allowed one unexcused absence for the semester. Any additional absences will result in 4 points being subtracted from the attendance and participation portion of your grade (which is 25% of your overall grade!). In addition, perpetual lateness will also be penalized. For every two times you are late you will be marked down for one full absence (i.e., 4 points will be subtracted).

The remainder of the attendance and participation portion of your grade will be determined based on your participation in class discussion, evidence of preparedness (i.e., that you've done the readings), and any quizzes and/or homework assignments that may be assigned or given in class. In general there will be no pop quizzes, but if I sense that people are not doing the readings I withhold the right to quiz the class without warning.

All quizzes and homework assignments will be graded on a check, check plus, check minus basis.

College Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the ideas or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. *Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.* It is the student's responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is cited. Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The Library and Writing Center have free guides designed to help students with problems of documentation.

College Policy on Cheating: Students are prohibited from using books, notes, and other reference materials during examinations except as specifically authorized by the instructor. Students may not copy other students' examination papers, have others take examinations for them, substitute examination booklets, submit papers written by others, or engage in other forms of academic dishonesty.

Student Disability Services: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability must first obtain an Academic Accommodation Request form from the Student Disability Services (SDS) office (607-962-9459). SDS is located on the lower level of the Commons Building, Room 148, just past the College Store. You should then contact me privately during my office hours to discuss

your special needs. Please address any needs or accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs.

Honors Contract Option: If you are honors-eligible (have a CGPA of 3.5 or greater), you may apply to take this course for honors credit by requesting an honors contract. An honors contract enriches a non-honors course by providing the opportunity for a deeper understanding of course topics. It also encourages student creativity through creation of alternative assignments and close interaction with the instructor. If you are interested in taking this course for honors credit, you must approach the instructor and request to earn honors credit for this course **within the first three weeks of the semester**. You and your instructor will then discuss and agree upon assignments, projects and criteria to deem the course appropriate for awarding honors credit. Please note that you will still be required to attend class and complete all work associated with the existing course. For additional information pertaining to the Honors Program, see <https://www.corning-cc.edu/honors-program>.

Drop Policy: I do **not** drop students automatically—so do not assume that if you stop coming I will automatically drop you from the course. **It is incumbent on you (the student) to drop the course!** If you do not officially drop the course, you will (more than likely) receive an 'F' for the semester.

The last day to drop this course with a W grade is November 4.

Weekly Reading List
This list is rough and tentative!

Week of Aug. 19:	Blaise Pascal, "Pascal's Wager" (from <i>Pensées</i>) W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"
Week of Aug. 26:	William James, "The Will to Believe" (from <i>Pensées</i>) Anselm, "The Ontological Argument" (from <i>Proslogion</i>) Gaunilo, "On Behalf of the Fool" Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways" (from <i>Summa Theologica</i>)
Week of Sep. 2:	No Class Monday, Sept. 2: Labor Day Samuel Clarke & David Hume, Contingent and Necessary Beings William Paley, "The Watch and the Watchmaker" (from <i>Natural Theology</i>) David Hume, <i>Dialogues concerning Natural Religion</i>
Week of Sep. 9:	Problem of Evil
Week of Sep. 16:	Free Will: Divine Foreknowledge
Week of Sep. 23:	Free Will: Hume and Reid
Week of Sep. 30:	Free Will: Modern work
Week of Oct. 7:	Mind-Body: Descartes, Arnauld
Week of Oct. 14:	Break Week
Week of Oct. 21:	Mind-Body: Bayle, Elisabeth
Week of Oct. 28:	Midterm: Monday, Oct. 28
Week of Nov. 4:	Ethics: Moral Relativism
Week of Nov. 11:	Ethics: Divine Command Theory
Week of Nov. 18:	Ethics: Self-Interest and Morality
Week of Nov. 25:	Thanksgiving Break
Week of Dec. 2:	Ethics: Abortion
Week of Dec. 9:	Final Exam Week