

# PHILOSOPHY 301: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2015 TTH 12:30-2:00 CAL 100

Bertrand Russell, a famous twentieth century British philosopher, once remarked that “the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as to seem not worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.” Whether or not Russell was right about the *point* of philosophy, his aphorism correctly describes what happens in many philosophy classrooms, including, as you’ll see, our own.

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**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 10:00-12:00

**Office Hours Location:** Pangea Café (JGB student lounge)

**TA for 41505, 41515, & 41525:** Megan Hyska

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**TA for 41510, 41520, & 41530:** Richard Davis

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**Office Hours:** Thursdays 2:30-4:30

**Office Hours Location:** WAG 303

## Required Texts

Augustine, *Confessions*. Trans. F.J. Sheed, Ed. Michael P. Foley. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006)

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Trans. and Ed. John Cottingham. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Eric Steinberg. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1993)

Plato, *Five Dialogues*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, Ed. John Cooper. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2002)

In addition to these four books, there are four required articles posted to Canvas. I will occasionally post additional optional reading to Canvas.

## What To Expect in This Course

The purpose of this course is twofold: (1) to inculcate a desire to ponder philosophical questions and (2) to deliver the philosophical skills necessary to begin answering those questions. In service of these goals, we will conduct a survey of important philosophical literature from the last 2500 years. We will examine the writing of Plato, St. Augustine, Descartes, and Hume, as well as modern authors engaged in the same philosophical enterprise. We will ask questions such as: *What is knowledge, and how much do we know? What is the appropriate relationship between a citizen and the state? What is the nature of time? Does God exist?*

Philosophy is difficult. *Really* difficult. We are going to try to wrap our heads around some radically complex ideas this semester. It's natural for students—even bright students—to struggle at times. In fact, if you're *not* struggling at times, you're probably not doing philosophy properly. Try to savor this struggle—it's what makes philosophy both fun and infuriating.

And remember, this is a *shared* struggle. Ludwig Wittgenstein, another famous 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, observed that “a philosopher who is not taking part in discussions is like a boxer who never goes into the ring.” Willingness to speak up, both in lecture and in section, will be crucial to your success. When clarification is needed (and, oh boy, clarification is *definitely* going to be needed), ask for clarification! Someone else almost certainly shares your question. We're all in this together, so we've got to help each other out.

## Assessment

Your grade will be determined by a weighted combination of the five assessments below:

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Paper:</b>	20% (due Feb 20 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Paper:</b>	25% (due Mar 27 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Paper:</b>	30% (due May 8 <sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm)
<b>Final Exam:</b>	15% (May 18 <sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am)
<b>Participation:</b>	10%

Paper submissions will be entirely online, via Canvas. Late papers will be docked  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade for each day after deadline. More details about the papers and the exam will be presented as the relevant dates approach.

The numerical grade scale for the course is as follows:

100-94 = A	79.9-77 = C+	63.9-60 = D-
93.9-90 = A-	76.9-74 = C	59.9 - 0 = F
89.9-87 = B+	73.9-70 = C-	
86.9-84 = B	69.9-67 = D+	
83.9-80 = B-	66.9-64 = D	

### **Course Website**

canvas.utexas.edu

Canvas is your friend. A copy of this syllabus is already there. So are the required readings which can't be found in our course texts. As the semester progresses, I'll also be posting my PowerPoint slides there, and (for the ambitious among you) some interesting secondary reading. When the TAs and I need to communicate with you, we'll do so via Canvas. You'll also be uploading your papers to Canvas. It's worth the time to familiarize yourself with the site's features now so that when you need to use it, you're not completely lost.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance at lecture and section is *mandatory*. Attendance will be taken during every lecture. All students receive one free unexcused absence. After that, unexcused absences will cost you one point off your final grade. Excuses must be cleared with your TA *prior* to lecture (except in the case of emergencies). Be prepared to supply documentation to support your excuse.

### **Documented Disability Statement**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>.

### **A Reminder about Academic Honesty**

UT's honor code reads:

*The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.*

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism of any kind is a major violation of the honor code and will not be tolerated. If you are unsure how to properly cite your sources, please consult myself or your TAs.

### **Tentative Schedule of Readings and Topics**

The pace of the course and the topics covered will be determined in part by the interest level and understanding of the class. This schedule is a rough outline, not a firm plan. To stay current with the reading assignments, you will need to attend class regularly. Assigned reading should be completed *before* lecture on the assigned day.

**Date:** January 20

**Reading:** none

**Date:** January 22

**Reading:** *Euthyphro* 1a-6e (Plato, pp. 1-8)

**Date:** January 27

**Reading:** *Euthyphro* 7a-16a (Plato, pp. 8-20)

**Date:** January 29

**Reading:** *Apology* 17a-27e (Plato, pp. 21-32)

**Date:** February 3

**Reading:** *Apology* 28a-42a (Plato, pp. 32-44)

**Date:** February 5

**Reading:** *Crito* 43a-48d (Plato, pp. 45-51)

**Date:** February 10

**Reading:** *Crito* 48e-54e (Plato, pp. 51-57)

**Date:** February 12

**Reading:** *Phaedo* 115b-118a (Plato, pp. 93-94, 151-154)

**Date:** February 17

**Reading:** *Confessions, Book 7 I-VI* (Augustine, pp. 115-124)

**Date:** February 19

**Reading:** *Confessions, Book 7 VII-XVI* (Augustine, pp. 124-132)

**Date:** February 24

**Reading:** *Meditation Four* (Descartes, pp. 37-43)

**Date:** February 26

**Reading:** *Meditation Five* (Descartes, pp. 44-49)

**Date:** March 3

**Reading:** *Of Miracles, Part I* (Hume, pp. 72-77)

**Date:** March 5

**Reading:** *Of Miracles, Part II* (Hume, pp. 78-90)

**Date:** March 10

**Reading:** *Confessions Book 11 X-XX* (Augustine, pp. 240-247)

**Date:** March 12

**Reading:** *Confessions Book 11 XXI-XXVIII* (Augustine, pp. 247-254)

**Date:** March 24

**Reading:** Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (Canvas)

**Date:** March 26

**Reading:** Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" (Canvas)

**Date:** March 31

**Reading:** *Meditation One*, (Descartes, pp. 12-15)

**Date:** April 2

**Reading:** *Meditation Two*, (Descartes, pp. 16-25)

**Date:** April 7

**Reading:** Bostrom, "Simulation Argument" (Canvas)

**Date:** April 9

**Reading:** Bostrom, "Simulation Argument" (Canvas)

**Date:** April 14

**Reading:** *Sceptical Doubts, Part I* (Hume, pp. 15-20)

**Date:** April 16

**Reading:** *Sceptical Doubts, Part II* (Hume, pp. 20-25)

**Date:** April 21

**Reading:** TA Guest Lecture

**Date:** April 23

**Reading:** TA Guest Lecture

**Date:** April 28

**Reading:** Goodman, "New Riddle of Induction" (Canvas)

**Date:** April 30

**Reading:** Goodman, "New Riddle of Induction" (Canvas)

**Date:** May 5

**Reading:** *Meno* 94e-100b (Plato, pp. 58-59, 87-92)

**Date:** May 7

**Reading:** Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (Canvas)