

# Course Syllabus

## Course Information

Course Number:	PHIL 305
Course Title:	Philosophy of Natural Science
Section:	500
Time:	Tuesday and Thursday 2:20 p.m. – 3:35 p.m.
Location:	YMCA 113
Credit Hours:	3 lecture hours.

## Instructor Details

Instructor:	Roger Sansom
Office:	YMCA 310
Phone:	979-862-6978 (but email is better)
E-Mail:	r-sansom@tamu.edu
Office Hours:	Wednesday and Friday 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
	On Zoom <a href="https://tamu.zoom.us/j/98726522162">https://tamu.zoom.us/j/98726522162</a> ⇨ ( <a href="https://tamu.zoom.us/j/98726522162">https://tamu.zoom.us/j/98726522162</a> )

## Course Description

*Critical analysis of scientific methods and achievements; the nature and types of explanation, discovery and confirmation, models and theories.*

*In this course we will examine three contemporary issues in the philosophy of science. We will investigate: what is the difference between sciences and so-called pseudosciences, what is responsible for change in scientific theories, and how do explanations that appeal to laws of nature work? I am sure that you will disagree with your classmates about these issues. That's healthy, and I expect you to criticize their views, and have them criticize your views. I expect this to be done in a constructive and respectful way. I want to make it clear from the beginning that I have no particular ax to grind. I will not try to encourage you to take up my positions on these issues and you will not be graded harshly for disagreeing with me. What I want is critical evaluation of all positions and to see you develop compelling justifications for the positions you accept.*

*We will read the work of other philosophers on these issues. Our goals are to become familiar with these texts, develop skills of critical thinking, create philosophical ideas of our own, and present them clearly and persuasively in papers. You are required to read the assigned texts. Usually, you will be discussing the works and the ideas they include with other students. Together you will be trying to figure out what the writer was trying to say and whether he or she was right or not. Sometimes, your classmates will say things that are incorrect. For example, they may misunderstand a passage in the text. You are responsible for noticing this and not learning that falsehood. You should also point out why you think that they are incorrect and why, for their sake and the sake of others in the group. In trying to do this, you yourself may be wrong, and they or someone else may show you why. It's okay to be wrong as long as you continue to be constructive. This is the sort of dialogue that I want to encourage. I see this activity as the most valuable time in class. It will allow you to develop the critical evaluation skills that you need to write good philosophy papers and will also be the most useful skills that you can gain from this class.*

*This course has a high writing workload. Primarily we will be focusing on thinking clearly and concisely so that we can write clearly and concisely.*

## Course Prerequisites

*Junior or senior classification or approval of instructor.*

## Special Course Designation

*None.*

## Course Learning Outcomes

*By the end of this course, the successful student should be able to identify, explain, and evaluate positions and justifying arguments in philosophy texts and create novel positions or arguments defending or criticizing a position or argument and communicate them clearly verbally and in written form.*

## Textbook and/or Resource Materials

*None. Everything is available through Canvas.*

## Compulsory Attendance Policy

*Attendance (and signing the roll) is compulsory in this course. The first three unexcused absences each result in a 1% course grade penalty and each further unexcused absence results in a 3% course grade penalty. See university rule 7 for what absences are excused.*

## Grading Policy

- 1. 10% Class participation. Participate regularly in your group discussions, presentation of group work, and class discussion.*
- 2. 15% Quizzes for some readings in topic 1 and all readings in topics 2 and 3. (to be taken on*

*canvas before class nearly every day we have reading(s) assigned).*

3. 30% Your best paper.\*\*

4. 30% Your second best paper.\*

5. 15% Your worst paper.\*\*

*\*\*Grades on your three papers will be assigned according to the following criteria:*

*A. Demonstrates clear understanding and critical insight on the issues of high quality.*

*B. Adequate understanding of the issues but little or moderate quality insight.*

*C. Mistaken understanding of issues.*

*D. Poor understanding of issues.*

*E.. Lack of comprehension of basic issues or failure to complete assignments.*

*Course Grading scale (A=89.5-100, B=79.5-89.5, C=69.5-79.5, D=59.5-69.5 F=0-59.5)*

## Late Work Policy

- *Quizzes are preparatory assignments and cannot be submitted late without an approved absence that did not allow them to be submitted on time.*
- *Papers 1, 2, and 3 submitted after their deadline, but before the course late work deadline, will receive a 10% penalty (e.g. a grade is dropped from 85% to 75%)*

*Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy (**Student Rule 7**(<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>)).*

## University Policies

### Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. If you will miss class for a university approved excuse, whenever possible, you must email me before the absence and talk to me after class after the absence, when you will provide me with relevant documentation.

Please refer to **Student Rule 7** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

## Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to **Student Rule 7** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” (**Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” (**Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07/>)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See **Student Rule 24** (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule24/>)).

# Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” (**Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20** (<https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/Rules-and-Procedures/Rules/Honor-System-Rules>)).

*You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at [aggiehonor.tamu.edu](https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu) (<https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>).*

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

*Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit [disability.tamu.edu](https://disability.tamu.edu) (<https://disability.tamu.edu>).*

## Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see **University Rule 08.01.01.M1** (<https://rules-saps.tamu.edu/PDFs/08.01.01.M1.pdf>)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.


Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

*Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with **Counseling and Psychological Services** (<https://caps.tamu.edu/>) (CAPS).*

*Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's **Title IX webpage** (<https://titleix.tamu.edu/>).*

# Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

*Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)  (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>).*

## University Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC) has trained peer consultants available to work with you on any kind of writing or speaking project, including research papers, lab reports, application essays, or creative writing, and at any stage of your process, whether you're deciding on a topic or reviewing your final draft. You can also get help with public speaking, presentations, and group projects. We can work with you in person at our Evans or BLCC locations or via Zoom or email. To schedule an appointment or to view our handouts, videos, or interactive learning modules, visit [writingcenter.tamu.edu](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu) (<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/>). If you have questions, need help making an appointment, or encounter difficulty accessing our services, call 979-458-1455 or email [uwc@tamu.edu](mailto:uwc@tamu.edu) (<mailto:uwc@tamu.edu>).

## Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through



informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to [howdy.tamu.edu](https://howdy.tamu.edu/) (<https://howdy.tamu.edu/>) and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](http://registrar.tamu.edu/Catalogs%2C-Policies-Procedures/FERPA/FERPA-Notice-to-Students#0-StatementofRights) (<http://registrar.tamu.edu/Catalogs%2C-Policies-Procedures/FERPA/FERPA-Notice-to-Students#0-StatementofRights>) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.

## Academic Freedom

**Texas Senate Bill 17**[Links to an external site.](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$) ⇨ ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_\\_https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf\\_\\_!!KwNVnqRv!](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$)

[Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49\\_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$)), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**SB 17**[Links to an external site.](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$) ⇨ ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_\\_https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf\\_\\_!!KwNVnqRv!](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$)

[Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49\\_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/billtext/pdf/SB00017F.pdf__!!KwNVnqRv!Ga6oUj761FSIeNBbcjflqkSPxA4a2LhiWK6BcFS49_kY-lpsL82YIOkYix1zyBEjV8XmSH32d-jTWFH0J3WzViU7ic8$)) has additional exceptions that include scholarly research and creative works.