

# Introduction to Philosophy

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Spring 2013

MWF 10:45-11:50

Language Hall 201

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*Office Hours:* W 2-4, and by appointment. (I'm willing to meet anytime I can. Email me to set up a time.)

## Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy in a guided discussion format. We will discuss classic and contemporary philosophical texts, examining issues in Metaphysics and Epistemology and Ethics. Topics include theories of knowledge, skepticism, ontology, the mind-body problem, the problem of free will, ethical theories (Consequentialism, Deontology, Virtue Ethics), and political philosophy. Throughout, we will concentrate on the evaluation and construction of philosophical arguments, emphasizing the method of philosophy.

## Course Objectives

Students should gain a basic sensibility to good and bad argumentation. They should be able to identify the parts of arguments they encounter, as well as the ability to analyze arguments to specify their strengths and weaknesses. They should develop the reading, verbal, and writing skills needed to recognize and construct coherent and persuasive arguments. Students should also acquire a basic understanding of important issues of interest to contemporary philosophers, especially in Metaphysics and Epistemology.

## Text

There is only one textbook for this course:

Gendler, Siegel, Cahn, eds. *Elements of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

This text should be available at the Oxford College Bookstore. Additional material will be made available via Blackboard. Please make sure you have signed onto the course.

## Policies

All policies here outlined are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

## Class Organization

Class meetings will consist primarily of open-ended discussions concerning the assigned reading. As noted below, students will be responsible for guiding class discussions, and students are expected to engage the discussion meaningfully.

One aim of this class is to teach the ability to argue convincingly. Stating your point of view loudly, assertively, or simply rudely is *not* equivalent to a convincing argument. Nor are insults, condescension, or *ad hominem* attacks legitimate refutations of another's position. In the course of discussion, try to keep your own statements modest while remaining sensitive and attentive to what others have to say. Effective response to criticism is an essential feature of good philosophy. Feel free to speak your mind, but allow others the same privilege.

## Attendance

I will not record attendance in this class. However, I will pay attention to your participation, and it will play a part in your final grade. Missing one or two classes will not be a problem, but missing five or six will be trouble. Besides, you will not gain much from the (rather dense) readings if you do not attend class.

You do not need to alert me to absences. However, if you do miss a class, you are responsible for the material covered. Make sure to do the assigned reading and ask a classmate for a summary of the discussion and notes. If you have any further questions, you are welcome to ask me.

## Readings

Special care has been taken to prevent the assigned reading from becoming onerous. In the ebb and flow of college life, it may nevertheless become difficult to stay on top of the reading. Also, note that some sessions require more reading than others. As a result, it is imperative that students *plan ahead*. Read ahead when you have the opportunity, so that you do not have to read too much when more is assigned or when you are otherwise occupied.

Be aware that reading philosophy is more difficult and time-consuming than reading for other contexts. Reading difficult and unappealing texts is an important skill that will be useful in any future work you do, and you will find the class much more and useful if you do the reading. We will discuss how to read philosophy in class.

In any case, you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts. That means reading and comprehending the material to the point that *you can ask meaningful questions*. Asking for a summary of the reading is not a meaningful question. Rather, you should be able to, for instance, point to a specific passage and ask what is happening therein. At the very least, you should understand the thesis of the text, and the argument(s) in its favor.

## Electronics

The use of computers and other electronic devices (iPads, cellphones, etc.) in class has a tendency to distract attention and interfere with classroom discussion, even for those not actively using them. They are *not to be used in class*, except when necessary for a presentation (or for some other compelling purpose).

## Assignments

### Class Discussion

Each student will be responsible for guiding the discussion surrounding a text assigned for one session. This can take a myriad of forms, but you are expected to do the reading and *then* discuss your plans with the instructor *at least two class sessions* beforehand. The requirements for this assignment will be discussed when you meet with the instructor.

### Philosophy in the Wild

A “Philosophy in the Wild” (PITW) presentation is something like philosophical show-and-tell. The presenter will bring to class an argument they find in the media—typically, an editorial—and present the argument to the class. This will involve reconstructing and evaluating the argument. The presentation should be less than 10 minutes, leaving 5 or more minutes for class discussion.

The argument to be presented must be communicated to and approved by the instructor *in advance* of the class. Send a link to the article and a statement of the article’s thesis *at least one class session* ahead of time. Once the article is approved, post it to Blackboard for the class to read ahead of your presentation. More details about this assignment will be provided.

### Argument Reconstruction

A short written argument reconstruction will be required. More information about this assignment will be provided.

### Papers

Two 3-4 page papers will be required in this course. For both papers, *complete* drafts will be exchanged with partners—*by hard copy and by email*—who will then be responsible for comments and criticisms before the final paper is due. (Deadlines are listed on the course schedule.) All drafts, comments, and final papers must additionally be submitted to the instructor—*by hard copy and by SafeAssign* (through Blackboard). Topics for the papers will be assigned.

### Exams

A midterm and a final will be administered in this course. More detail will be provided.

### Evaluation

Evaluation in this class will be based on overall performance. Students should therefore strive to perform well in all aspects of the class. That said, a *rough* guide to the consideration given to each component is 10% for the class discussion, 5% for the PITW presentation, 10% for the argument reconstruction, 20% for each essay, and 10% for each exam. Class participation will also be considered (15%).

### Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect in this class, as it is in all classes at Oxford College. Academic and personal integrity are serious matters, and will be treated as such in this course. The instructor and students alike are responsible for upholding both the spirit and the letter of the Code. Students must understand its content—especially regarding academic honesty, integrity, and plagiarism—and should clarify any questions they might have. All students are also expected to act with civility,

personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, including their intellectual property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. Details about the Honor Code are available online:

[http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current\\_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot](http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot).

Philosophy is a collaborative enterprise. Ideas are best developed in discourse where criticism and suggestions are freely exchanged. You should not interpret the honor code to impact your ability to work together, and you are encouraged to do so. However, anything represented as your own work must be your own, with the remainder of submitted material properly attributed to its source(s).

### Citations

Plagiarism is not the same thing as incorrect citation style. I am not very concerned with how you cite sources, so long as they are cited in a way that enables the reader to find the source.

Nevertheless, there are standard conventions for citing sources, and it is worthwhile to begin using them early in your academic career. You will find some models on the course website. Additionally, there are software applications available that can help with citations (e.g., EasyBib, EndNote, and Zotero), and you are encouraged to learn how to use at least one of these. See

<http://oxford.library.emory.edu/conduct-research/plagiarism-and-academic-honesty/citing-your-sources> for more information.

### Accommodations

Students requiring special accommodations should contact the Oxford College Office of Access and Disability Resources at (770) 784-8415 to register. This includes medical accommodations for temporary illnesses.

### Assessment

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

### Final Note

As much as I find it distasteful (for the very reasons I am about to cite), my time at Oxford has indicated the necessity of the following.

This is *college*. This institution provides resources, including professors and your fellow students, that you can use to edify and prepare yourself for your future. However, students are presumed to be adults, with responsibility for their own behavior and education. The resources provided will not come to you. You must seek them out and employ them to your own advantage. Do the reading. Write and re-write drafts of your papers. Use office hours. Use the writing center. Ask for help where and when you need it. If you get a bad grade, figure out where you were mistaken and work hard to improve. I am always willing to offer help, if you are prepared to seek it. On the other hand, if you fail to meet expectations, I am not going to chase after you. I will simply evaluate your performance accordingly.

College is the transition to independent and professional life. It is the opportunity to become the person you want to be. Treat each other with respect and act in a way that demands it. Among other things, this means addressing each other appropriately—for your instructors, ‘Professor’ or ‘Doctor’. Value your own time and that of others.

You can benefit tremendously from this course, from each other, and from Oxford, but your seriousness, commitment, and effort are required.

## Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. I anticipate falling behind, in which case students are still responsible for keeping up with the reading in line with class discussion. If you are responsible for a presentation on a certain date and will not be able to present, let the instructor know as far ahead of time as possible.

(Bb) indicates material on Blackboard.

<b>January 16</b>	<b>Welcome</b>
<b>January 18</b>	<b>Introduction to Philosophy</b>  Reading: Blackburn, "What Is Philosophy?"; reading philosophy websites (Bb)  Assignment: Sign up for presentations (Bb)
<b>January 21</b>	<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY</b>
<b>January 23</b>	<b>Philosophical Argument</b>  Reading: Blackburn, "The Elements of Logic"; Argument Analysis Worksheet (Bb); Fallacy Primer (Bb)
<b>January 25</b>	<b>Philosophical Argument</b>  Assignment: Argument Analysis Worksheet exercises (Bb)  PITW: DMM
<b>January 28</b>	<b>What is Knowledge?</b>  Reading: Plato, "What is Knowledge?" from the <i>Meno</i> ; Plato, <i>Theatetus</i> 201c-210d (Bb)  Introduction: DMM
<b>January 30</b>	<b>Gettier Problems</b>  Reading: Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"  Introduction: _____
<b>February 1</b>	<b>Theories of Knowledge</b>  Reading: Nozick, "Knowledge"  Introduction: _____
<b>February 4</b>	<b>Cartesian Skepticism and the <i>Cogito</i></b>  Reading: Sextus Empiricus, <i>The Five Modes</i> (Bb); Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 1 and 2  Introduction: _____

	Introduction: _____
<b>February 6</b>	<b>Responses to Skepticism</b>  Reading: Moore, "Proof of an External World"; Moore, "Certainty"  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>February 8</b>	<b>Argument Critique Workshop</b>  <i>Argument critique draft due</i>
<b>February 11</b>	<b>Responses to Skepticism</b>  Reading: Nozick, "Skepticism"  Introduction: _____
<b>February 13</b>	<b>Descartes's Response</b>  <i>Argument critique due</i>  Reading: Descartes, Meditation 6  Introduction: _____
<b>February 15</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____
<b>February 18</b>	<b>Transition: Brains in Vats</b>  Reading: Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"; Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics"  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>February 20</b>	<b>Plato and Reason</b>  Reading: Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" from the <i>Republic</i>  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>February 22</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  PITW: _____

	PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
<b>February 25</b>	<b>Berkeley and Perception</b>  Reading: Berkeley, selections from <i>Principles</i>  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>February 27</b>	<b>Quine and Sense-Data Realism</b>  Reading: Quine, "Posits and Reality"  Introduction: _____
<b>March 1</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
<b>March 4</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____
<b>March 6</b>	<b>Paper Writing</b>  Reading: Paper Writing Handout (Bb)
<b>March 8</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____
<b>March 11</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>March 13</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>March 15</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<b>March 18</b>	<b>Dualism</b>



	<p><i>Paper 1 draft deadline—submit and email to partners</i></p> <p>Reading: Descartes, Meditation 6 (again)</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
<b>March 20</b>	<p><b>Physicalism</b></p> <p>Reading: Stoljar, “Physicalism”; Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
<b>March 22</b>	<p><b>Paper Writing Workshop</b></p> <p>Reading/Assignment: Partner paper comments.</p>
<b>March 25</b>	<p><b>Physicalism</b></p> <p>Reading: Churchland, “Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
<b>March 27</b>	<p><b>Anti-Physicalism</b></p> <p>Reading: Kripke, “The Modal Argument”; Jackson, “The Knowledge Argument”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
<b>March 29</b>	<p><b>PITW Day</b></p> <p><i>Paper 1 due</i></p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p>
<b>April 1</b>	<p><b>Transition to Ethics</b></p> <p>Reading: Epictetus, selections from the <i>Handbook</i> (Bb); Plato, “Glaucon’s Challenge” from the <i>Republic</i></p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
<b>April 3</b>	<p><b>Plato on Justice</b></p> <p>Reading: Plato, “On the Harmony of the Soul” from the <i>Republic</i>.</p>

	Introduction: _____
<b>April 5</b>	<b>CLASS CANCELLED</b>
<b>April 8</b>	<b>Consequentialism</b>  Reading: Mill, selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i> ; Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism”  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>April 10</b>	<b>Against Consequentialism</b>  Reading: Williams, “Utilitarianism, Integrity, and Responsibility”  Introduction: _____
<b>April 12</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____  PITW: _____
<b>April 15</b>	<b>Deontology</b>  Reading: Kant, Selections from <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> ; O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>April 17</b>	<b>Virtue Ethics</b>  Reading: Aristotle, Selections from the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> ; Hursthouse, “Normative Virtue Ethics”  Introduction: _____  Introduction: _____
<b>April 19</b>	<b>PITW Day</b>  <i>Paper 2 draft deadline—submit and email to partners</i>  PITW: _____  PITW: _____

	PITW: _____
	PITW: _____
<b><i>April 22</i></b>	<b>Paper Workshop</b>
	Reading/Assignment: Partner paper comments.
<b><i>April 24</i></b>	<b>Summary and Conclusion</b>
<b><i>April 26</i></b>	<b>PITW Day</b>
	PITW: _____
	PITW: _____
	PITW: _____
	PITW: _____
<b><i>April 29</i></b>	<b>Review</b>
	<i>Paper 3 due</i>
<b><i>May 2</i></b> <b><i>9am-12pm</i></b>	<b>Final Exam</b>