

Instructor: Colin McLearn
Course: PHIL 101
Time: T/R 9:30-10:20 a.m.
Location: TEAC 105
Office: 1003 Oldfather Hall

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<http://colinmclear.net>
UNL Philosophy
Office Hours: By
appointment

Introduction to Philosophy

The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term

Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man
Wilfrid Sellars

Course Description

The subject matter of philosophy traditionally concerns the articulation of "big" questions such as, "Can we know anything?"; "What is real?"; "What kinds of things exist?". Philosophers use rigorous and disciplined methods of thinking, in the hopes of bringing such questions under intellectual control. This course will be an in-depth look at a few specific topics, rather than a comprehensive survey of the field and its history. You will learn what philosophy is all about and how to do it yourself.

ACE Certification

By passing this course you will fulfill ACE (Achievement Centered General Education) Outcome 5: "Use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues." Your written work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the specifications described below.

Course Expectations

In this class, we will analyze, interpret, and critically evaluate philosophical texts, and use standards of evidence appropriate to philosophy to address the issues discussed. The readings, even when quite short, will likely be much more difficult

than you are used to. Expect to spend enough time reading and critically *thinking* about the material that you can articulate not only what understood from the material but also what you *didn't* understand.

- **Attendance:** Attendance is required for both lecture and section. **1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every absence after your third one. Missing more than three weeks of class (9 classes) may result in a failing grade for the course.** Consistent late arrival or early departure will also negatively impact your grade.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site is available at: <http://colinmclear.net/phil101>. Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted here. Please let me know if you have any problems. Technical glitches, computer malfunctions and crashing hard drives are not excuses for failing to complete work in this class.
- **Format for Papers:** All work must be typed and submitted electronically as either a .rtf or .doc file . I will not accept any handwritten work aside from that we do in class. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. Your name, my name, the date and assignment should appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. Your last name and the page number must appear in the top right hand corner on each subsequent page. Please staple or paperclip hard copies of papers and drafts. You are responsible for the presentation of your papers.
- **Late Work:** Generally I do not accept late work. Late papers and assignments will standardly be marked down by **1/3 of a letter grade for each day the work is late** (for example, from A- to B+, from B+ to B, and so on). **If you anticipate having difficulty with meeting a deadline please speak to me or your section leader about the possibility of an extension.**

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should be able to **(i)** find the argument of a text and restate it clearly in their own words; **(ii)** explain viewpoints clearly that are not their own; **(iii)** think critically about the philosophical ideas discussed in this course; **(iv)** write papers using theses, organization, arguments, evidence, and language suitable to analytical writing in general and the discipline of philosophy in particular.

Course Format

You will come to three classes each week. Two classes will consist of lectures, led by Dr. McLear. The third is a meeting of your section, led by your TA, which will have about 20 students in it. The main point of sections is not to review material from the lectures but rather to improve your understanding of that material via discussion with your peers and section leader. If you have questions about the lectures, you should ask them during the lecture.

Required Materials

Readings will be posted on the course website. There is only one required book.

- Vaughn – *Writing Philosophically*. New York: Oxford Press. 2006.

Students are expected to bring all relevant materials to class.

Evaluation

Two Written Essays: 30%

- **Paper One:** Exposition. Explain and analyze a philosophical argument. Topics will be provided. Approximately 2 pages. 10%
- **Paper Two:** Critical Analysis. Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument. Topics will be provided. Approximately 3-6 pages. 20%

Two Exams: 50%

- The exams will involve a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.
 - Mid-Term: 20%
 - Comprehensive Final: 30%

Five Reading Responses: 10%

- Explain and discuss issues raised by the reading. For example, what, in the reading, did you understand and what didn't you? What argument was raised in the reading? Were there critical points made? Were they successful? Reading responses should be a minimum of 200 words and maximum of 600 words in length and are due at least 24 hours before your scheduled section (exact deadline will be set by your section leader). You may choose which assignments you wish to respond to. **However, at least two responses must be submitted by the time of the mid-term exam** All responses should be emailed to your section leader. The subject line must read: "PHIL 101 Reading Response" along with the date.

Participation Grade: 10%

- The participation grade takes into account your attendance in class and section as well as the quantity and quality of your participation.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with UNL's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, available [online](http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code) at <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code>. **In this course, committing an act of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism) may cause you to fail the course.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – It just isn't worth it.
- **University Policies:** This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.
- **ADA:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation series, students must be registered with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.
- **Misc.:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- **Jargon:** It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "[Philosophical Terms and Methods](#)."
- **Writing a Philosophy paper:** Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't really mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than [Jim Pryor's](#). Please consult it. Hacker's [A Writer's Reference](#) is also extremely helpful. Useful online references may be found at the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#).
- **Help with writing:** The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check [the Writing Center website](#) at <http://www.unl.edu/writing> for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.
- **Reference:** [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#): <http://plato.stanford.edu>.

Course Topics

The Placement Problem: Science vs. Our Everyday Understanding

Science tells us that the world consists of a multitude of microscopic particles and elementary forces. But the world we experience is a world of macroscopic objects and living beings whose sensible features we are intimately familiar with. Given the successes of the scientific image, how do we place various aspects of the everyday world with which we're so familiar? Over the course of the semester we'll explore this issue as it plays out in various different areas.

- **Color:** Nothing could be more obviously true than the claim that all material objects are colored. But physics gives us good reason to think that no material object is in fact colored. Which view is correct?
- **Consciousness:** One reason to think that objects are colored is that we are conscious of colors. But what *is* consciousness? Is there a place for it in the physical world?
- **Representation:** The physical world as described by science is a world of particles, waves, fields, and forces. Things, understood in this way, act upon each other, but there is no clear explanation of how one thing

could come to be *about* another thing. How, for example, could a bunch of colored dots on a page or screen (as in a photo) come to represent or be about some event, person, or place? How is it that we ourselves could have mental states, such as beliefs and desires, that are about the world? Can we understand and explain this kind of representational aboutness in a way that is compatible with our understanding of the physical world?

- **Value:** When we say that something is good or bad, beautiful or ugly are we attributing a property to that thing? Is it plausible that physical objects could have such properties or would they be too strange to be the kind of thing compatible with what physics tells us objects are like? If nothing is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, would that mean that nothing matters? What could we do in the face of an absurd world?
- **Alternate Replies—Skepticism and Common Sense:** So far we've assumed that science gives us knowledge about how the world really is, and that this could trump our common sense conception of the world. But perhaps there is reason to think that this is impossible.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR:

Tuesday	Thursday
<div>Aug 27th</div> Introduction	29th Color and Secondary Qualities Galileo– <i>The Assayer</i> , pp. 273-79 Relativity Arguments
<div>Sep 3rd</div> The ‘Absolute Conception’ of Reality	5th Consciousness Nagel - “What’s it like to be a bat?”
10th Nagel (Continued)	12th Block – “Concepts of consciousness”
17th Block (continued)	19th Jackson – “Epiphenomenal qualia”
24th Jackson (continued)	26th Lewis – “What Experience Teaches”
<div>Oct 1st</div> Lewis (continued)	3rd Catch-up
8th Intentionality Crane – “The Puzzle of Representation”	10th Paper 1 Due Friday by 4 p.m. Dretske – “A Recipe for Thought”
15th Searle – “Is the Mind a Computer Program?”	17th Catch-up Exam Review
22nd Fall Break—No Class	24th Mid-Term Exam
29th No Class	31st Value Mackie - “The subjectivity of values”

Tuesday	Thursday
Nov 5th Mackie (continued)	7th Williams – “Knowledge, Science, Convergence”
12th Camus - “The myth of Sisyphus” Nagel - “The absurd”	14th Wallace – “Constructing Normativity”
19th Wallace (continued)	21st Catch-up
26th Skepticism and Common Sense External World Skepticism: Descartes - <i>Meditations I-II</i>	28th Thanksgiving Break—No Class
Dec 3rd Moore - “Proof of an external world” Malcolm - “Defending common sense”	5th Paper 2 Due Friday by 4 p.m. Skepticism About Induction: Russell - “On induction”
10th Skepticism About Deduction: Carroll - “What the tortoise said to Achilles”	12th Last Day of Class Exam Review