

# **PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy - Winter 2020**

## **Course Syllabus**

### **Contact Information**

Professor: Dr. David Elliott

Lectures: TR 10:00 - 11:15

Location: EA 106

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### **Course Description**

In this course we will survey some of the most influential issues that philosophers have examined. These issues include:

- Is ethics a practice where knowledge and/or truth is possible? Or is it only a matter of personal or cultural beliefs or practices? Are human fetuses or other non-human animals "persons" (i.e., do they have the same moral status that we normally give to other human infants, children or adults?) Is war or terrorism ever morally justified?
- Does God exist? Is religious belief reasonable or irrational? Does the existence of evil in the world show that a morally good God does not exist?
- What is knowledge? How can we be certain when we really have it? Are there different kinds of knowledge?
- Does life have any meaning or purpose? If it does, is its meaning or purpose objectively or subjectively determined? Is life 'absurd'? If it is, is it still worth living?
- What is human consciousness? Is it a purely material or physical phenomenon? Or is it something uniquely non-material? Do we have "souls"? What is the relationship between our minds and our bodies?

Depending on the rate of our progress through these difficult questions, there may not be sufficient time to pursue this last question.

These questions will be pursued as issues or themes in philosophy. Although historical sources will be read and studied, no effort will be made to consider these questions in historical sequence.

## Course Goals

The content and assignments of this course have following teaching goals:

- Introduce students, in survey form, to some of the main themes and questions addressed in (mostly, but not exclusively) Western philosophy.
- Enable students to recognize, construct, and analyze good arguments.
- Enable students to think carefully, critically, and rigorously about difficult, important philosophical issues.
- Encourage students to think independently (i.e., for themselves) about such issues.

## Course Requirements

Assignment	Value	Date
1st Mid-Term Test	25%	February 13
2nd Mid-term Test	25%	March 31
Participation	(+5%)	N/A
Final Exam	50%	April 16

- The 1st mid-term will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions.
- The 2nd mid-term will consist of a single essay question which will be circulated in advance.
- The final exam will be comprehensive in both content and format. The **final exam is mandatory**; students must write it in order to pass the course. Any one who is unable to take the final exam will have to arrange a deferral through their faculty or college.

While regular in-class participation is strongly recommended, it is not a formal course requirement. The participation component in your final grade functions as a *bonus*. Students who contribute regularly and qualitatively to in-class or office hour discussions may have up to five additional percentage points added to their final course grade.

## Method of Instruction

Classes are conducted as informal lectures with class discussion. Focus will be on the readings and the basic problems raised by them. Ideally, lectures will be short

and class discussion will occupy the bulk of class time. Students should carefully read the assigned reading before each class (taking notes while reading is an excellent study practice; in philosophy it is practically *necessary*), and then come to class prepared to discuss themes and questions raised by the reading. The course textbook has excellent study questions following most articles. Also, for each topic unit of the course, study questions for that unit will be posted on URCourses. These are the questions that will be the focus of the first midterm test and the final exam.

Students are also encouraged to ask questions regularly of their own, raise philosophical objections, etc., related to any material from the readings or in regard to anything mentioned in the lectures. *There are no "stupid" questions in philosophy!*

*Course Overheads:* Presentation slides/overheads will be used in class. These materials, however, are only intended to guide our discussion and focus in class, and therefore, are not a resource independent of our time in class. They will not be available on the URCourses website.

### **Required Textbook**

- Bailey, Andrew (ed.), *The Broadview Introduction to Philosophy*. Broadview Press, 2019.

### **Reading Schedule**

Within the first two weeks of classes a complete list of course topics and required readings will be provided. This list will be followed consecutively---i.e., in the order presented. Since I want to encourage class discussion, I find it difficult to keep to date-based schedule. This means that students will have to keep up on which readings they should prepare for before each class. I will, however, start most classes by reviewing where we are in the reading schedule, and what should be read for next class.

The first hour or so of the course will start with a general introduction to philosophy. No specific readings are required for this. However, the introduction in the course textbook on pp. XIII-XXIII is excellent, and covers many of the topics that I will go over in class.

### **Course Policies**

*Academic Accommodations/Accessibility:* Any student who needs academic accommodation should discuss this with me within the first two weeks of classes after first contacting the Center for Student Accessibility located on the 2nd Floor the Riddell Centre, Rm 229 ([accessibility@uregina.ca](mailto:accessibility@uregina.ca)).

*Academic Honesty:* Any student found plagiarizing or otherwise acting dishonestly will be reported. It is unfair to other students who pursue their studies honestly to not report such incidents. The consequences for academic misconduct can include receiving a failing grade for the course and additional sanctions from the university. If you are unsure about whether a certain action is academically appropriate, do not

hesitate to ask. Students are encouraged to meet and to discuss course material outside of class. However, students are individually responsible for preparing their own original work for the course tests and the final exam. Further information about the University's policies on academic misconduct can be found on the "Understanding Academic Misconduct" webpage.

*Missed Tests/Final Exam:* If, because of some unexpected emergency, illness or other predicament, you cannot attend any of the midterm tests please contact me as soon as possible. The same applies to situations where you know in advance that you cannot attend the test. In either case, please be prepared to provide appropriate documentation. Also, as noted above, anyone who is unable to take the final exam will have to arrange a deferral through their own faculty or college.

*NOTE: Please see the posted "Announcements for Students in Faculty of Arts Courses" posted on the URCourses site for further general regulations that will be followed in this course.*