

PHIL 101  
**Introduction to Philosophy**  
Fall 2018

**Professor Lisa Tessman**

[ltessman@binghamton.edu](mailto:ltessman@binghamton.edu)

Office: Library Tower 1215

Office hours: Mon 11:00-1:00 or by appointment.

**Teaching Assistants:**

Jeff Hastings

Eric Janec

Rob Whelan

**Required texts:**

No texts need to be purchased; all are available electronically.

Unless otherwise indicated, all texts are available as pdf files (under “Content”) on Blackboard.

Those that are not available as pdf files can be accessed through a link provided.

**Course Description:**

In this course students will both study historical and contemporary philosophical texts, and learn to do philosophy themselves. The texts focus on philosophical problems such as: “What is reality?” “What can we know?” “Is there a human nature?” “Does God exist?” “Why be good?” “Are values relative?” “What is the relationship between society and an individual?” “Is government justified?” “What should be done about injustices?” We will read traditional philosophical work as well as challenges to the tradition by those who take different approaches to doing philosophy. Students will learn to formulate philosophical questions, understand and critique difficult philosophical texts, and develop arguments to support their own philosophical positions.

**Course Objectives:**

- To familiarize students with some historical and contemporary philosophical texts, and with the major subfields of Philosophy.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills.
- Learning Outcome: This course satisfies the Humanities General Education Requirement; thus in this course, students “will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.” The course also satisfies the Harpur College Writing Requirement, so students will “obtain considerable experience and receive significant guidance or instruction in writing.”

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) **Ten reading responses, worth a total of 20% of the final grade.** There will be eleven opportunities to submit a reading response; your top ten will count toward the grade (so you may either skip one, or have your lowest grade dropped).

Reading response questions will be posted on myCourses and are due by 9:00 PM the evening before the lecture on that assigned reading. They are to be submitted via myCourses (there is a link to each Assignment under “Content”). Late responses will not receive credit. Reading responses must be between 150-200 words. I (and the TAs) will share selected responses for discussion in class, anonymously. You may write “please don’t share this response” (or something similar) on your response if you do not want it to be shared. Please feel free, but not obligated, to reveal that you are the author of a response that is shared in class.

All responses should demonstrate a clear understanding of the relevant reading(s), and should engage critically with the reading(s). All responses will be graded anonymously—the TAs and I will see your names only after grades for all responses have been submitted.

Grade for each response:

- 0 = did not complete the assignment (on time), or outside of word limits, or showed little or no understanding of the reading, or very poorly written, etc.
- 1 = showed at least some understanding of the reading and at least some development of and argument in support of the response.
- 2 = showed excellent understanding of the reading and developed and supported the response well.

Grade for total number of points on top ten reading responses:

- 20 points: A
- 18-19 points: A-
- 16-17 points: B+
- 14-15 points: B
- 12-13 points: B-
- 10-11 points: C+
- 8-9 points: C
- 6-7 points: C-
- 5 points: D
- Below 5 points: F

## **2) Note taking, worth a total of 20% of the final grade.**

The point of taking notes is to help you understand (not to memorize) the material that you are studying. Note taking for this purpose is a skill that will be taught and practiced in class. Each student may earn up to ten points for notes on assigned readings, and up to ten points for lecture notes. You may come to my office hours or to your TA’s office hours any time within two weeks from any assigned reading or from any lecture to get your notes checked, and to have points awarded. You will be awarded anywhere from 0 to 10 points for each kind of notes on each visit, and receive feedback about how to take better notes. If your note taking skills are outstanding from the start, you may earn the entire 20 points in one visit to office hours near the beginning of the semester. If you begin the semester without good note taking skills, you will have the opportunity to

improve and earn the 20 points gradually, as long as you come consistently to office hours.

Grade for total number of points on reading notes and lecture notes:

20 points: A  
18-19 points: A-  
16-17 points: B+  
14-15 points: B  
12-13 points: B-  
10-11 points: C+  
8-9 points: C  
6-7 points: C-  
5 points: D  
Below 5 points: F

- 3) Three in-class essays with rewrites, worth a total of 60% of the final grade, broken down as follows:**
- a) In-class essays, each worth 15% of the final grade;**
  - b) Re-writes of essays, each worth 5% of the final grade.**

You may write your in-class essays by hand or on an electronic device (preferred), but you may not go online during the in-class essays, until you are ready to log on to submit your work, and you may not communicate with others (electronically or otherwise) during the in-class essays. For the in-class essays, you may use all notes that you have taken yourself, and you may refer to all assigned readings. However, you may not look at sources that were not assigned (e.g. Wikipedia, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, etc.). Any student who violates these rules will receive a zero on the essay (and rewrite). Essays will be graded anonymously.

Because you have access to notes and texts for the in-class essays, you do not need to memorize anything in this course. However, don't let this fool you into thinking that you don't need to study. The essay questions are difficult; you will not just be asked to regurgitate material. An essay that simply explains the text in the same way that it has been explained or discussed in lecture or discussion section will receive a low grade. Essays must present original, carefully thought out, and well supported ideas that engage with the readings; the essays should demonstrate both that you have understood the material and that you have something of your own to contribute in response. Because there is limited time to plan and write the essay in class, it is a good idea to prepare by doing a lot of your thinking ahead of time. Make sure that you understand each text well, and then try to develop several interesting and thoughtful things that you could say about each text.

Each of the essays must be rewritten. The rewritten essay is due (as an Assignment under "content" on myCourses) one week from the time that the essays are returned (even if you are not in class when they are returned). If you hand-write your essay, you must also return your original in-class essay (with the TA's comments on it) to your TA in order for your rewrite to be graded. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me or with your TA to discuss your

essay before you rewrite it. It may also be helpful to visit the Critical Thinking Lab <https://www.binghamton.edu/philosophy/critical-thinking.html> for help with rewriting. Rewrites must exhibit substantive revisions. We cannot grade the rewrites anonymously, because each rewrite must be compared with the earlier essay.

An in-class essay may be made up only with a documented excuse. Students who miss an in-class essay due to documented emergency or illness should notify me before the time of the essay if possible, and schedule a make-up time. Students who miss an in-class essay for foreseeable reasons (such as athletic competitions or job interviews) also require documentation, and may only make up the in-class essay *before* the day that it is given; please arrange this at least a week in advance. Students who miss an in-class essay without documentation will receive a zero on the essay (and rewrite).

**Grading of essays (in-class and revised):**

**A (95):** understands the material very well; AND engages with the material by clearly stating and arguing for a thoughtful response.

**B (85):** at least mostly understands the material, though there may be some minor misunderstandings or lack of clarity; AND engages with the material by stating a response sufficiently clearly, and offering an argument for it, though the argument may be weak or somewhat disorganized.

**C (75):** understands at least some of the material, but also may have some major misunderstandings or may be too vague; AND engages with the material by offering a position that may lack clarity and/or may be supported by an argument that is very weak, disorganized, or impossible to follow.

**D (65):** fundamentally misunderstands the material; OR understands the material but engages with it by making assertions without offering any supporting reasons or argumentation.

**F (55):** does not offer any original engagement with the material (whether or not the material has been explained well).

Even if you earn an A on an in-class essay, if your revision improves the essay in a significant way, your revision will receive an additional 5 points (up to 100) for the improvement.

**Lectures and discussion sections:**

Students are expected to prepare for and attend all lectures and discussion sections. Please avoid scheduling travel, appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. If you miss class, you will still be completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day; please get in touch with another student to find out what you missed.

Please take notes by hand during class, and do not use any electronic devices during lectures or discussion sections. Most people learn better by taking hand-written notes, because doing so prevents us from writing down too much verbatim; it instead forces us to summarize ideas or at least choose which points are the most important ones to write down, and this requires *thinking*. There are exceptions to this generalization, so if you have a particular reason for needing to take notes on an electronic device, please see me ahead of time for permission.

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to attending and participating in lectures and discussion section meetings, students are expected to do at least 9 ½ hours of course-related work *outside of class* each week during the semester. This includes time spent

completing assigned readings, taking notes on the readings, preparing questions and comments on the readings to bring to lectures and/or discussion section meetings, reviewing material before in-class essays, and revising essays.

Prepare for each lecture by completing the assigned reading, taking careful notes, and jotting down any questions that you may have. Active participation in lectures is encouraged; you can participate by asking questions, responding to others' questions, or commenting on any points that come up. Especially if you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in classes, you might want to spend some time in advance writing down what you would like to say in class. Every student is expected to regularly contribute ideas in discussion sections; to facilitate this for each other, please make the classroom a place for disagreement, but not for disrespect.

If I and/or the TAs are pronouncing your name wrong, using the wrong pronouns for you, etc., please correct us! Also please let us know if there is anything we can do to facilitate your participation or accommodate your particular learning style.

**Disability-related equal access accommodations:** I am happy to make accommodations (e.g. extended time, quiet environment, etc.) for any student with a documented need for it. Please talk with me by Sept 5 if you are requesting accommodations (talk with me by this date even if you do not yet have your documentation). If you are unsure about whether or not you need, or qualify for, accommodations, I encourage you to visit the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office: <http://www.binghamton.edu/ssd/>.

**Academic Honesty:** I follow the Philosophy Department policy on academic honesty (below). Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code. Every student is required to pass an online test (by 9:40 AM, Sept 24) on how to recognize and avoid plagiarism; **students will not receive credit for essays unless and until they have passed this test.** You are advised to take the test at least a week before the deadline to avoid last-minute difficulties.

#### **Philosophy Department Guidelines on Academic Honesty**

The Philosophy Department considers plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to be serious breaches of the code of ethics governing academic life. They are also violations of Harpur College and Binghamton University policies.

In order to contribute to a culture of Academic Honesty within both the Department and the University, the Philosophy Department has agreed on the following guidelines:

- 1) Instructors will include a statement describing their policy regarding Academic Honesty on all course syllabi.
- 2) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will formally bring the violation to the attention of the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee by either:
  - a. submitting an Admission of Dishonesty Form that has been signed by the student,  
*or*
  - b. initiating a hearing before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee.
- 3) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor for the course will not give the student credit for the assignment, whether or not the student re-submits honest work.
- 4) Instructors will decide what further grade consequences are appropriate in response to the dishonesty at their own discretion; the typical consequence is a grade of 'F' for the course.



## Schedule

### **Week 1:**

Wed. Aug 22: Introduction to the course.

Fri. Aug 24: Discussion section.

### **Part I: Metaphysics and Epistemology**

### **Week 2:**

Mon. Aug 27:

Read before class: Plato, *Meno*.

Wed. Aug 29:

Read before class: Plato, *Republic*, Book V from 472a to end; Book VI from 504d to end; Book VII through 524d [These numbers refer to the marginal pagination].

Fri. Aug 31:

Discussion section.

### **Week 3:**

Mon. Sept 3: No class

Wed. Sept 5:

[Monday classes meet]

Read before class: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First, Second, and Third Meditation. (Reading response #1 due Sept 4, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Sept 7:

Discussion section.

### **Week 4:**

Mon. Sept 10: No class

Wed. Sept 12:

Read before class: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Meditation.

Fri. Sept 14:

Discussion section.

### **Week 5:**

Mon. Sept 17:

Read before class: John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*  
Book One, Chapter II, sections 1-5;  
Book Two, Chapter I, sections 1-8;  
Book Two, Chapter II, sections 1-3;  
Book Two, Chapter VIII, sections 8-17.  
(Reading response #2 due Sept 16, 9:00 PM).

Wed. Sept 19: No class.

Fri. Sept 21: Discussion section.

## **Week 6:**

Mon. Sept 24:

Read before class: David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section II, Section III, Section IV, and Part I of Section V.

Also to do before class (you are advised to do this *at least a week ahead of time*; technical difficulties will be not accepted as an excuse not to have it completed on time).

Complete the tutorials, and take the tests, on “How to Recognize Plagiarism” at:

<https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html>

**Before** class time, you must email your TA the certificate showing that you have passed the tests. **Students who have not passed the test will not be permitted to write essays for credit. Your certificate will have a date and time on it, and you will receive no credit for essays written before this date and time.**

Wed. Sept 26:

Logic.

Read before class: The UNC Writing Center handout on fallacies.

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/fallacies/>

(Reading response #3 due Sept 25, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Sept 28:

Discussion section.

## **Week 7:**

Mon. Oct 1:

In-class essay #1.

Wed. Oct 3:

Read before class: Linda Martín Alcoff, “On Judging Epistemic Credibility: Is Social Identity Relevant?” In *Engendering Rationalities* (2001), pgs. 53-80.  
(Reading response #4 due Oct 2, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Oct 5:

Discussion section.

## **Week 8:**

Mon. Oct 8:

Essay #1 returned. Revising workshop.

Wed. Oct 10:

Read before class: Tamar Gendler, “Alief in Action (and Reaction),” *Mind and Language* Vol. 23, No. 5 (2008), pgs. 552-585.  
(Reading response #5 due Oct 9, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Oct 12:

No class.

## **Week 9:**

Mon. Oct 15:

Read before class: Tamar Gendler, "On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias," *Philosophical Studies* (2011).

After doing the reading, go to <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Registration>, then click on "take a test" and take at least three different tests at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

## Part II: Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy

Wed. Oct 17:

Essay #1 rewrites due (by 9:40 AM).

Read before class: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Chapter I.

Fri. Oct 19: Discussion section.

### Week 10:

Mon. Oct 22:

Read before class: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter II and Chapter IV.

The text is not available as a pdf file. It is available at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11224/11224-h/11224-h.htm>

(Reading response #6 due Oct 21, 9:00 PM).

Wed. Oct 24:

Read before class: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), pp. 229-243.

Fri. Oct 26: Discussion section.

### Week 11:

Mon. Oct 29:

In-class essay #2.

Wed. Oct 31:

Read before class: Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (2001), pp. 814-834.  
(Reading response #7 due Oct 30, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Nov 2: Discussion section.

### Week 12:

Mon. Nov 5:

Essay #2 returned.

Read before class: Christopher Gowans, "Moral Theory, Moral Dilemmas, and Moral Responsibility," in H.E. Mason, Ed., *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory* (pgs. 199-215). (1996).

Wed. Nov 7:

Read before class: Margaret Urban Walker, "Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics," chapter 7 (pgs. 103-116) in *Moral Contexts* (2003).  
(Reading response #8 due Nov 6, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Nov 9: Discussion section.

**Week 13:**

Mon. Nov 12:

Essay #2 rewrites due (by 9:40 AM).

Read before class: David Wong, "Pluralism and Ambivalence," in Michael Krausz, Ed., *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology* (pgs. 254-267). (2010).

Wed. Nov 14:

Read before class: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII and XIV.

Fri. Nov 16: Discussion section.

**Week 14:**

Mon. Nov 19:

Read before class: John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (also referred to as Book II of *Two Treatises of Government*), Chapters I - III.  
(Reading response #9 due Nov 18, 9:00 PM).

Wed. Nov 21: No class.

Fri. Nov 23: No class.

**Week 15:**

Mon. Nov 26:

Read before class: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), pgs. 11-17, 60-65, 126-130, 136-142.

Wed. Nov 28:

In class essay #3.

Fri. Nov 30: Discussion section.

**Week 16:**

Mon. Dec 3:

Last day to receive points for note-taking.

Read before class: Eva Feder Kittay, "Taking Dependency Seriously," *Hypatia* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pgs. 8-29.  
(Reading response #10 due Dec 2, 9:00 PM).

Wed. Dec 5:

Essay #3 returned.

Read before class: Charles Mills, "Contract of Breach: Repairing the Racial Contract," Chapter 4 (pgs. 106-133) of *Contract and Domination* (2007).

(Reading response #11 due Dec 4, 9:00 PM).

Fri. Dec 7:              Discussion section.

**Wed. Dec 12:** Essay #3 rewrites due (by 9:40 AM).