

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 2300.001

Summer I, 2016

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Williford

Meeting Time: M-Th, 10:30-12:30

Meeting Place: Pickard Hall (PKH) 302

Office and Office Hours: 305 Carlisle Hall  
M-W 2:00-3:30PM & By Appointment

## Course Dates

June 6-July 7, 2016

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**Course description.** This course provides an interactive approach to the study of philosophy. Not only will students learn about important philosophical figures, movements, and methodology but they will be encouraged to identify their own philosophical positions and consider how these positions relate to those of the philosophers we've studied. Students are also encouraged to consider how particular philosophical issues have been important in their own lives and to discuss philosophical problems with friends and family outside of class.

Representative topics covered in this course include epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Discussion of these topics will give rise to such questions as 'What do I really know?', 'Am I free?'; 'Am I morally responsible for what I do?' 'Is there an afterlife?' 'How should I treat others?' and 'What should I do with my life?'

At the end of the course, students will be able to explain key philosophical concepts and the positions of major figures and will demonstrate skill in philosophical argumentation. Finally, students will have awareness of their own philosophical positions and the evaluative skills needed for building and improving upon their overall worldview in the future.

***This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy & Culture.***

**Learning outcomes.** Students who attend all classes and study properly will: (1) understand the nature of reasoning and argumentation (Critical Thinking Skills); (2) understand many of the ways in which historical philosophers have attempted to address philosophical problems, including the problem of the relation of the individual to society in both its ethical and political dimensions (Personal and Social Responsibility); (3) be able to identify various philosophical themes and influences and specify their relation to the contemporary world; (4) demonstrate competency in oral and written communication (Communication Skills); and (5) work effectively in a collaborative environment.

## Core curriculum objectives (official boilerplate).

- Critical Thinking Skills: creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills: effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- Social Responsibility: intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to

engage effectively in regional, national and global communities

- Personal Responsibility: the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

**Signature assignment.** The take-home midterm (see “Evaluation” below) will be used to assess the student’s achievement of the Core Curriculum Objectives. In order to excel on this midterm, the student must demonstrate critical thinking skills, communication skills, and an understanding of arguments about the nature of social and personal responsibility.

**Required Texts** (These books should be available at the UTA Bookstore.)

*A Rulebook for Arguments*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, by Anthony Weston, Hackett, 2009

*Plato: Five Dialogues*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, translated by G.M.A. Grube, Hackett, 2002

*Early Buddhist Discourses*, edited and translated by John J. Holder, Hackett, 2006

*Meditations, Objections, and Replies* by René Descartes, edited and translated by Roger Ariew & Donald Cress, Hackett, 2006

*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, by David Hume, R. Popkin (ed.), Hackett, 1998

*Existentialism is a Humanism*, by Jean-Paul Sartre, translated by C. Macomber, Yale, 2007

## Evaluation

- (1) Attendance, participation (25%)
- (2) One take-home essay exam (25%)
- (3) Five quizzes (25%)
- (4) An in-class final exam (25%)

### *Attendance and Participation*

Attendance will be taken everyday; a student may have up to two unexcused absences without this affecting his or her grade adversely. For each further unexcused absence the attendance/participation score will be reduced by 10 points. Participation will be noted throughout the session. The more you participate in discussions, raise questions about the readings, give your own arguments and counter-arguments, etc., the higher your participation grade.

### *Five Quizzes*

There will be a quiz at the end of each class week over the material covered and readings assigned that week.

### *Take-home Essay Exam*

On Thursday, June 18, I will assign a take-home examination consisting of three short answer questions. Each answer will need to be no more than two pages in length (typed, double-spaced, and in a 12-point font). In order to answer the questions adequately, the student will need to be familiar with the reading and lecture material. Your answers will be due in class on Thursday, June 25.

### *In-class Final Exam*

The in-class final will be an essay exam consisting of three to four questions. It will be cumulative. The exam may also contain a vocabulary portion. It will be on the scheduled exam day for this course: **Monday, July 11, 10:30-12:30.**

## Course Schedule

P=*Plato: Five Dialogues*

EBD= *Early Buddhist Discourses*

MOR= *Meditations, Objections and Replies*

DNR=*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

EH=*Existentialism is a Humanism*

RA=*A Rulebook for Arguments*

Q=Quiz

Phil.=Philosophy

Args=Arguments

Intro=Introduction

### Week 1 (6/6-9)

M 6/6: Introduction: What is Philosophy? What it is good for? A Brief History of Philosophy, Philosophical Subdisciplines

Tu 6/7: RA, Intro, Ch. I, Appendix II; P, *Euthyphro*. Topics: Argument, Definition, Ancient Greek Philosophy, Ethics, Phil. of Religion

W 6/8: RA, Ch II; P, *Meno, Apology*. Topics: Epistemology, Generalizations, Phil. of Mathematics, Metaphysics, Problem of Universals

Th 6/9: RA, Chs. VI and IX, Appendix I; EBD, "General Introduction" Topics: Deductive Logic, Rhetoric, Fallacies, Indian Philosophy (**Q1**)

### Week 2 (6/13-16)

M 6/13: RA, Ch. IV; EBD, Chs. 1-3. Topics: Indian and Buddhist Phil., Phil. of Religion, Ethics, Enlightenment, Causation, Compassion

Tu 6/14: RA, Ch. VII; EBD, Chs. 4-6. Topics: Compassion, Suffering, Meditation, Consciousness, Desire, Addiction, Freedom, Self

W 6/15: RA, Ch. VIII; EBD, Ch. 7, 8 & 10 Topics: Personal Identity, Metaphysics, Altruism vs Egoism, Utilitarianism, Ultimate Values

Th 6/16: EBD, Chs. 11-14. Topics: Consciousness, Personal Identity, Altruism vs Egoism, Truth (**Q2, Midterm Assigned**)

### Week 3 (6/20-23)

M 6/20: MOR, "Introduction", "Synopsis", Meditations 1&2. Topics: Phil. of Mind, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Skepticism

Tu 6/21: MOR, Meditations 3&4. Topics: Phil. of Mind, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Proofs of God's Existence, Certainty

W 6/22: MOR, Meditations 5&6. Topics: Mind-Body Dualism, Substance, the Soul, the Existence of God

Th 6/23: MOR, Fourth Set of Objections and Reply (pp. 115-153). Topics: Mind-Body, Essence, Knowledge (**Q3, Midterm Due**)

### Week 4 (6/27-30)

M 6/27 DNR, Editor's Intro, Parts I-V. Topics: Natural vs. Revealed Theology, Design Argument, Early Modern Phil., Atheism, Fideism

Tu 6/28: DNR, Parts VI-VIII. Topics: , Skepticism, Chance vs. Necessity, Phil. of Cosmology, Ultimate Explanations, Epicureanism

W 6/29: DNR, Part IX. Topics: Cosmological and Ontological Arguments, Existence, Contingency, *A Priori* Knowledge, Spinozism

Th 6/30: DNR, Parts X-XII. Topics: Conditional Probabilities, Bayes' Theorem, Problem of Evil, Theodicy, Skeptical Theism (**Q4**)

### Week 5 (7/4-7)

M 7/4: Holiday, no class!

Tu 7/5: EH, Preface, Intro. & pp. 17-54. Topics: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Phil., Consciousness, Existence, Essence, Ethics, Politics, Humanism,

W 7/6: EH, pp. 54-72. Topics: Existentialism, Marxism, Socialism, Communism, Capitalism, Individualism, Despair, Quietism

Th 7/7: Concluding discussion. Review of material. Preparation for final exam. (**Q5**)

**Final Exam: Monday, July 11, 10:30-12:30PM in 302 Pickard Hall**

**NB: Last day to drop classes—June 27**

## IMPORTANT POLICIES OF MINE

**Blackboard:** I will be using Blackboard in this class to post the syllabus, handouts, announcements, links, supplementary readings, slides, class notes, and any class recordings. Be sure to check it regularly.  
(<https://elearn.uta.edu/>)

**Late Work:** All late work will be docked a full letter grade for every day that it is late.

**Laptops and Phones:** In my class I do not allow students to use laptops, smartphones, or other electronic devices without special permission. Any note taking must be done the old fashioned way. If I see laptops or smart phones out during class, I will ask you to put them up. If you won't put your device away, I will ask you to leave class.

**Homework for Other Courses:** Students are not allowed to read for or do homework for other courses while in my class.

**Incompletes:** I will not give a student a grade of Incomplete (I), unless he or she has a compelling, and documented, reason (e.g., a medical emergency).

**Plagiarism:** No student should have any doubt about what counts as plagiarism. I will assume that every student in this class has seen this tutorial provided by the UTA library and have taken the quiz embedded in it: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. All cases of plagiarism will be turned over to the Office of Student Conduct.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Title IX:** The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law "Title IX" such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code: *I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located [insert a description of the nearest exit/emergency exit]. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center, 411 Central Library, offers individual 40 minute sessions to review assignments, *Quick Hits* (5-10 minute quick answers to questions), and workshops on grammar and specific writing projects. Visit <https://uta.mywconline.com/> to register and make appointments. For hours, information about the writing workshops we offer, scheduling a classroom visit, and descriptions of the services we offer undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members, please visit our website at [www.uta.edu/owl/](http://www.uta.edu/owl/).