

PHIL 102 - 003: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

2024 Winter, Term 2: Jan 08, 2024 to Apr 12, 2024

Reserved for students in the Coordinated Arts Program's PPE stream

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site. This acknowledgment represents an active dedication to more just, more accountable relations.

Instructor

Dr. Celia Edell

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Office hours:

In-person office hour: Mon & Weds 11am-12pm
also available by appointment

Course Description:

By surveying some key texts from the philosophical tradition, we will examine questions that relate to central areas of human existence. First, we will familiarize ourselves with key philosophical theories of morality and society. From there, we will take a look at a few social and ethical questions surrounding sex, love, technology, death, and meaning. Each topic is discussed briefly and is meant to introduce a few philosophical arguments in order to pique interest and invite further study in what most interests you.

On top of familiarizing students with canonical philosophy, this course will teach how to think deeply and philosophically about any given issue. We will become comfortable with not having definitive answers to most questions, and instead, find the value in asking the right kinds of questions, think critically about the answers, and provide rational arguments in support or against them.

This course will consider the following topics:

1. **Ethics.** We will consider questions such as: How should we determine the moral way to live? Is morality a question of character, actions, or consequences?
2. **Society.** We will consider questions such as: What is a social contract? What would life be like without one? How should we seek a just society for all? What is the crisis of modernity?
3. **Identity.** We will consider questions such as: What is a self? Are we the same people we were in the past?
4. **Sex.** We will consider questions such as: What is it to have sex? What is sexual morality? How do we have ethical sex?
5. **Love.** We will consider questions such as: What is love? How is love connected to power, justice, and responsibility?

6. **Internet.** We will consider questions such as: How is society different online than offline? What are echo chambers and how do we escape them? What are the social and political costs of AI technology like deepfakes?
7. **Death.** We will consider questions such as: How do we define death? What constitutes the badness of death? Should we mourn the dead?
8. **Meaning.** We will consider questions such as: How do we find meaning in life? What does freedom involve? What is existential angst?

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 1 Jan 8-12	Introduction	Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" https://skepdic.com/russell.html Abundez-Guerra & Nobis, "Responding to Morally Flawed Historical Philosophers and Philosophies" https://1000wordphilosophy.com/2018/07/17/flawed-philosophers/
Week 2 Jan 15-19	Ethics: Character-based	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [excerpt] https://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/arisne1.htm https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html
Week 3 Jan 22-26	Ethics: Duty-based	Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [excerpt]
Week 4 Jan 29-Feb 2	Ethics: Ends-based	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> [excerpt] https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/introphil/chapter/john-stuart-mill/
Week 5 Feb 5-9	Ethics & Integrity	Plato's <i>Republic</i> [excerpt] Batson, "Moral Masquerades: Experimental Exploration of the Nature of Moral Motivation" Personal reflection assignment due Feb 7
Week 6 Feb 12-16	Society	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> [excerpts] https://www.commonlit.org/en/texts/excerpts-from-leviathan Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> [excerpts] https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/165rous-sc.html
Week 7 Feb 19-23		Midterm break
Week 8 Feb 26-Mar 1	Identity	Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" Alcoff, "Sotomayor's Reasoning"

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 9 Mar 4-8	Sex	Goldman, A. "Plain Sex" Badhwar, N. "Carnal Wisdom and Sexual Virtue"
Week 10 Mar 11-15	Love	Beauvoir, "The Woman in Love" hooks, "Living by a Love Ethic"
Week 11 Mar 18-22	Internet	Nguyen, "Escape the echo chamber" https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult Rini, "Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop" Argumentative essay due March 22
Week 12 Mar 25-29	Death	Brennan, "Feminist Philosophers Turn Their Thoughts to Death" Earp, "Against mourning" https://aeon.co/essays/do-not-weep-for-your-dead-how-to-mourn-as-the-stoics-did Friday March 29: Good Friday – no class
Week 13 Apr 1-5	Meaning	Monday April 1: Easter Monday – no class Camus, excerpt from <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> [excerpt]
Week 14 Apr 8-12	Course wrap-up	Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"

Learning Objectives

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Explain the basic structure of a philosophical argument--premises and conclusion—and outline arguments in philosophical works. (in-class activities, 4-sentence papers, exam)
2. Evaluate the strength of arguments in assigned texts, in oral or written work by other students, and their own arguments. (4-sentence papers, class discussions)
3. Make a claim about a philosophical issue and defend it with sound reasoning, in writing. (essay)
4. Participate in a respectful discussion with others on a philosophical question: clarify positions and arguments from themselves or others, criticize flawed arguments, present their own arguments, and do all this in manner that respects the other people in the discussion. (in-class discussions)

Assessments of Learning

- (1) Attendance and Participation (20%)
- (2) Four 4-Sentence Papers, 5 points each (20%)
- (3) Argumentative Essay (30%)

(4) Final Exam (35%)

(1) Attendance and Participation (20%)

- **Attendance: 10%**
Your attendance will be taken in lectures using Canvas.
- **Participation in Friday group activity: 10%**
Each Friday class will be devoted to an in-class activity to be completed in groups. This may involve working together to answer discussion questions, fill in the blanks, debate on teams, etc.
You can miss one discussion meeting during the term without excuse and without penalty.

(2) Four Sentence Papers (20%) – due 4 times throughout term

Students will write a very brief written paper to **at least 4 of our main course topics**, and submit it via Canvas. These will be due on four different weeks, and will be completed as your Friday activity. **You will not know which weeks will involve a 4-sentence paper**, so it is imperative that you attend all Friday discussions.

Your answers can focus on a reading done prior to class discussion; or they can incorporate the discussion we've had in lectures. These are very short reactions— **4 sentences**.

A [four-sentence paper](#) is a brief writing exercise that emphasizes the consideration of opposing viewpoints and objections—crucial writing skills in philosophy. The general form of a four-sentence paper is:

1. ____ says that ____.
2. I reply that ____, because ____.
3. One might object that ____.
4. I reply that ____.

Each is **worth five points**; they will be assessed via the following rubric:

1. Correct understanding and representation of what 'they' say and why they say it.
2. Clarity and thoughtfulness in the statement of what you say and why you say it.
3. Thoughtful appreciation of a possible objection to what you say.
4. Originality and innovation in your response to that objection.
5. Quality of writing (i.e. clean and clear prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar and presentation).

(3) Argumentative Essay (30%) – due March 22nd 2024

The argumentative essay assignment is due on Canvas before **March 22nd 2024 at 11:59PM**. This is an academic paper in which you address a philosophical question or problem based on the

readings. This is a good opportunity to expand upon one of your 4-sentence papers into a longer format.

Think of your audience is an intelligent undergraduate student who has attended our course and done our readings. The essay will be marked on content (clarity of presentation, strength of argument, relevance of thesis) and form (spelling, grammar, presentation in print). **This paper should be 5-6 pages in length.** Double space and use 12pt font. Submit in doc or pdf format.

(4) Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will be made up of multiple choice and short answer questions, covering content from the entire semester. The final exam will be held during the exam period for Term 2, in April 2024. We won't know the exact date and time of the exam until partway through the term.

Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance is a requirement of the course. Discussion and interactivity are crucial elements to learn philosophy. You are learning a skill, not just a list of facts. Philosophy cannot be 'crammed'. There are two ways that the attendance requirement is enforced. First, formally, there is a participation component to student grades, as described above. Second, informally, I consider regular attendance to be indicative of dedication to the course, so I am much more inclined to make arrangements for things like extensions, excused assignments, etc. for students who are regular course participants. If you ask for a concession that is a matter of discretion, you will have a much higher chance of a positive response if you have a track record of coming and participating in lectures and tutorials.

Reading

You do not need to buy any textbooks for this course. Most of the reading materials can be found on the library website in electronic form. Other reading materials can be downloaded from Canvas or will be distributed in class under the fair use provisions.

Lecture Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants during the lecture. Please refrain from using computers and other electronic devices for purposes not related to the lectures, e.g. messaging, watching videos, playing games, online shopping, etc. Such behaviours are both disruptive and disrespectful. Students are also expected to take part in in-class learning activities and discussions. Improper use of electronic devices, disruptive and disrespectful behaviour, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviour, if repeated, will result in disciplinary actions.

Grading Standards

Specific grading guidelines for essays will be provided later in the course and will be available on the course website.

- 80% to 100% (A- to A+) Exceptional performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

- 68% to 79% (B- to B+) Competent performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
- 50% to 67% (D to C+) Adequate performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.
- 00% to 49% (F) Inadequate performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

University Policies

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Academic Accommodation

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the Centre for Accessibility (previously known as Access & Diversity). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request

copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

Equity and special arrangements

I will do my best to ensure that all students have a fair and equitable opportunity for participation and success in the course. If you need accommodations to complete your coursework please speak with the Access and Diversity office, if you haven't already: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity> If you have religious obligations that conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations, these can be accommodated as well. See the university policy on religious holidays at: <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy65.pdf>. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation due to religious obligations. If you need to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, please discuss those with Celia before the drop date, as these do not fall under official accommodations by the university.