



PHL 101 Introduction to Philosophy

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course explores topics in all of the major areas of philosophy: logic, metaphysics, epistemology, social & political philosophy, and ethics. This course serves as preparation for more advanced studies in philosophy. In addition, the course provides the opportunity to discuss critically and rationally some of the most fundamental questions of human existence: Does a god exist? Can we really know anything with certainty? What is the nature of the mind? What is this self that I think I am? Do we have free will? What is the best kind of society/government? These questions, and the tentative answers to them, are about you and your life.

Course Specific Learning Outcomes

After completing the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate basic reasoning skills such as: recognizing fallacies, identifying logical implications of a theory or claim, distinguishing valid and invalid inferences, identifying relevant and irrelevant information, and utilize multiple sources of information.
2. Write argumentative essays (essays in which students either create arguments of their own or explain the arguments of others, and in which a conclusion is clearly stated and an attempt at presenting an argument is made.)
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the main areas of philosophy: ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, logic.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of specific concepts and issues in each of the main areas.

University Studies Learning Outcomes

This course satisfies the learning outcomes for University Studies cluster 4a: Human Questions and Contexts. After completing this course, students will be able to:

5. Explain different perspectives on: a) what it means to be human and how the significance of human existence has been understood; b) the nature of human relationships and how these relationships are evidenced in regard to the broader world; or c) how knowledge is obtained, maintained and changed, as well as how individuals come to understand and think about the world around them.
6. Recognize ethical issues in complex contexts and evaluate the ethical positions taken by themselves and others.
7. Locate, analyze, summarize, paraphrase and synthesize material from a variety of sources.
8. Evaluate arguments made in support of different perspectives on human questions and contexts.

REQUIRED READINGS

All of the readings are available online either through the course site itself, or through the library's online course reserves. I've done this so that students don't have to purchase an expensive textbook. I've also used public domain materials as much as possible and respected copyrights to the best of my ability.

GRADE ASSESSMENTS

Coursework will include exams, discussion boards, and reading quizzes.

Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade	Lowest Grade Dropped
2 Exams	$2 \times 30\% = 60\%$	
6 Discussion Boards	$5 \times 6\% = 30\%$	✓
6 Reading Quizzes	$5 \times 2\% = 10\%$	✓
Total	$60\% + 30\% + 10\% = 100\%$	

Exams

- There will be two (2) exams.
- Exam 1 is November 17.
- Exam 2 is December 15.
- Each exam is worth 30% of your final grade (for a total of 60%).
- None of the exams is cumulative.
- ***There is neither a Midterm nor a Final exam for the course.***

Discussion Boards

- There will be six (6) discussion board assignments.
- Five (5) discussion boards are each worth 6% of your final grade (for a total of 30%).
- ***The lowest discussion board grade is dropped.***

Reading Quizzes

- There will be six (6) reading quizzes.
- Five (5) of those are worth 2% of your final grade (for a total of 10%).
- ***The lowest quiz grade is dropped.***

Reading Quizzes and Discussion Boards may be completed at any time before their due dates. You don't have to wait until the day a reading quiz or discussion board is due in order to complete it. You can submit them *any time* before they're due.

EXTRA CREDIT

There will be an extra credit assignment worth a possible 10% of your final grade (i.e., a full letter grade). It is a 3-5 page essay due on December 15. However, it will not be graded unless the author has completed all of the regular coursework for the semester, and it will not be graded until after the semester is over. ***Late extra credit assignments will not be accepted.***

THEMES

The course is organized into six themes that hopefully resonate with students, making the material more approachable. Students should have an intuitive grasp of each theme, which can be used as points of entry into philosophical problems and theories. The six themes are:



Each theme will constitute a course unit (about two weeks of the course), with time set aside for reflection, review, active learning, examinations and other assignments. Materials will be clustered around each theme. Often, various theories or problems will be discussed more than once from the perspective of different themes. The course is designed so that students progress through each theme in stages.

- Stage 1** After reading the provided materials, students take a low-stakes reading quiz.
- Stage 2** After taking the reading quiz, students participate in a medium-stakes discussion board activity about that theme.
- Stage 3** High-stakes assessments cover multiple themes and include exams.

Please keep in mind that course materials are designed so that students cannot progress to a later stage without completing earlier stages. myCourses will not allow you to view or post on a discussion board until you have taken the reading quiz for that theme.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Imagination

Imagination Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme students will be able to:

1. Given a hypothetical scenario or thought experiment, identify whether it is consistent, inconsistent, or fallacious, and why.
2. Given an argument, identify its conclusion, the reasons supporting that conclusion, and assess its strength, weakness, validity or invalidity.
3. Explain how thought experiments can be philosophical evidence for a conclusion when other kinds of evidence (observation, common sense, faith, etc.) are unavailable or unacceptable.
4. Explain how thought experiments can emphasize the role of sympathy, empathy, or value to moral reasoning.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
October 26	“Famous Thought Experiments” (Video link)	
October 27	“Reclaiming the Imagination” by Timothy Williamson	

Happiness

Happiness Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme students will be able to:

1. Given a hypothetical scenario in which someone is happy (or unhappy), explain what makes that person happy (or unhappy).
2. Explain the relation between different kinds of value (pleasure, satisfaction, well-being, etc.) and happiness.
3. Identify and explain empirical results in the science of happiness, and explain their philosophical implications.
4. Given a hypothetical scenario in which someone acts solely in their self-interest, explain whether that action contributes to their happiness according to various theories.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
October 30-31	Aristotle “Nichomachean Ethics” Mill “Utilitarianism”	
November 1-2	Shelly Kagan, “Me and My Life”	
November 3		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due

Death

Death Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme, students will be able to:

1. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario in which someone dies, explain what makes that death tragic, not tragic, bad, evil, etc.
2. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario in which someone is killed, explain why the killing was or was not morally wrong according to various theories (utilitarianism, Kant’s ethics, natural rights theory, etc.)
3. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario in which someone dies, explain whether it is possible for that person to survive the death of their body according to various theories (dualism, identity theory, memory theory, Buddhist “empty self” theory, etc.)
4. Explain the epistemic and metaphysical differences between the mind/soul and the body according to various theories.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
November 6 - 7	"Meditation Six" by Descartes (excerpts)	
November 8 - 9	"Dialogues on Personal Identity and Immortality" by John Perry (excerpts)	
November 10		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due
November 13 - 14	"Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals" by Immanuel Kant	
November 15 - 16	"The Magistrate and the Mob" by Kai Nielsen & The Trolley Problem	
November 17		Exam 1

Deception

Deception Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme, students will be able to:

1. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual situation in which someone lies, explain whether or not the lie was morally permissible according to various theories (e.g., utilitarianism, Kantianism, etc.)
2. Explain the epistemological significance of the distinction between appearance and reality according to various theories.
3. Explain the moral, political, and scientific value of knowledge and why skepticism is a threat to that value.
4. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual scenario wherein one's evidence is undetectably misleading, explain how real knowledge might or might not be gained in that scenario according to various theories.
5. Explain the moral significance of secrets, misinformation, or promise-keeping.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
November 20	"Meditation One" by Descartes	
November 21	"Meditation Two" by Descartes	
November 22		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due
November 27-28	"Brains in a Vat" by Hilary Putnam	
November 29-30	"Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals" by Kant	
December 1		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due

Freedom

Freedom Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme, students will be able to:

1. Explain the ontological problem of human freedom and various solutions to it.
2. Identify and explain reasons to accept or reject the Principle of Alternative Possibilities.
3. Explain the relationship between freedom and moral responsibility.
4. Given a hypothetical or counterfactual situation in which a person's action is not free, explain whether that person is morally responsible for that action according to various theories.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
December 4-5	"Human Freedom and the Self" by Roderick Chisholm	
December 6-7	"Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" by Harry Frankfurt (excerpts)	
December 8		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due

Justice

Justice Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this theme students will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between justice-as-fairness and justice-as-equality.
2. Identify and explain reasons to accept and reject various theories of social justice.
3. Given a hypothetical situation in which a state violates a fundamental human right, apply a specific theory of social justice to explain whether and under what conditions citizens are morally permitted to disobey the law.

Dates	Readings	Assignments
December 11-13	"Justice as Fairness" by John Rawls	
December 14		Reading Quiz Due Discussion Board Due
December 15		Exam 2 Extra Credit Due

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments are not accepted.

Communication Plan

Here are my expectations for electronic communication:

- Please use email "ONLY" when the subject is of a personal and confidential matter (including questions about grades). If the question you ask is of a nature that even one other person in the course could benefit from the answer, post the question in the appropriate discussion board forum.
- I check my email daily Monday through Friday during normal business hours only. You can expect a reply from me via email within 24 hours during the work week. You "may" get an email reply during the weekend, but that would be an exception not the rule.
- I will also check the discussion forums during the work week. I will post often during the first weeks of the course and then drop off in activity while expecting participants to fill any void. Rest assured however, I "will" be participating in what I hope will be lively discussions and will "always" reply to any discussion comment directed specifically at me.
- I am not an instructor who sends email to my students when they submit an assignment. If you do not hear from me after submitting work, consider it a good thing.

Time Considerations

Students should be prepared to spend a minimum of 3 hours a week on reading and on course assignments. While you may feel that I'm displaying a lot of information to you on a weekly basis remember that in a traditional "live" course you would be coming to class for 3 hours and then spending an additional 3-6 hours (at least) outside of class on assignments and reading. In our online course environment my expectation is that you will be spending those 3 "class hours" on your own, working on the concepts that you would usually get in a live lecture. Please be sure to budget your time accordingly.

Substantive Participation Should Include:

- Add value to the discussion and avoid simply repeating, agreeing with, or answering yes or no to peer's comments.
- Challenge comments in class, including those of the facilitator.
- Ask insightful questions.
- Answer other people's questions.
- Exemplify the point with real-life events, when possible.
- Make comments that are relevant to the course content and objectives.

Ideas for Substantive Participation Include:

- Share an experience that is related to the discussion. Comment on other participants' experiences that are related to the course.
- Ask others questions about their ideas and experiences that are related to the course.
- Challenge a point that another participant made in a respectful manner. Offer a different perspective on an idea that is being discussed.
- Give insights gained from readings that were assigned for the week. If you need more information, ask the participants a question about the week's reading.
- Discuss a work issue that is related to the course or discussion and ask for feedback.
- Relate how you have applied what you have read, learned or discussed regarding the course to your personal and professional life.
- Share another resource such as Web links, books, etc. that you have used to answer other participants' questions or as you explore the topics of the course (as it is a violation of copyright law to copy the actual page).

Late Assignments

Late assignments are not accepted.

Attendance Policy

It is your responsibility to complete all assignments on time and participate in the course.

Incomplete Policy

The incomplete policy for this course is that at least 70% of the course must be already completed and an exceptional circumstance (i.e., medical issue) must exist. If you feel that you require an incomplete for an exceptional reason, you need to email me and state your reasons for the incomplete in writing. You must also contact the University Registrar.

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, signing someone else's name on an attendance sheet, etc.) will not be tolerated. I reserve the right to fail any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty for the course.

All UMass Dartmouth students are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity and scholarly practice. The University does not tolerate academic dishonesty of any variety, whether as a result of a failure to understand required academic and scholarly procedure or as an act of intentional dishonesty.

A student found responsible of academic dishonesty is subject to severe disciplinary action which may include dismissal from the University. The procedure for responding to incidents of academic dishonesty may be found in Section III of this document. You may also refer to the Student Handbook for information about the judicial process.

A high standard of academic integrity promotes the pursuit of truth and learning and respect for the intellectual accomplishments of others. These are values that are fundamental to the mission of this University. Such values are undermined by academic dishonesty.

Academic freedom is a fundamental right in any institution of higher learning. Honesty and integrity are necessary preconditions of this freedom. Academic integrity requires that all academic work be wholly the product of an identified individual or individuals. Joint efforts are legitimate only when the assistance of others is explicitly acknowledged and deemed appropriate by the instructor of the course. Ethical conduct is the obligation of every member of the University community, and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses.

Maintenance of the standards of academic integrity and the successful administration of this policy depend on the mutual cooperation of faculty and students.

Faculty cooperation is essential for successful application of the procedures defined by this Academic Integrity Policy. Faculty members promote academic integrity by making clear on their syllabi their expectations concerning homework assignments, collaborative student efforts, research papers, examinations, computer-based infractions, and the like. Efforts should be made to detect and to prevent cheating and plagiarism in all academic assignments. If faculty members have evidence of academic dishonesty, they are expected to report such evidence promptly.

Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Students are also expected to report incidents of academic dishonesty to the instructor or dean of the instructional unit.

The intent of this policy is to make clear the standards of academic integrity at UMass Dartmouth.

*For additional information on violations, infractions, and consequences visit the UMass Dartmouth Student Academic Integrity Policy at the link below.

<http://www.umassd.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbookintroduction/studentconductpolicies/academicintegritypolicy/>

Center for Access & Success

In accordance with University policy, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please meet with the instructor at the beginning of the semester and provide the appropriate paperwork for the Center for Access and Success. The necessary paperwork is obtained when you bring proper documentation to the Center, which is located in Liberal Arts, Room 016; phone: 508.999.8711.

Tutoring

If you are having difficulty with the class please:

Post a message on the Discussion Board – be sure to use your classmates for troubleshooting and problem solving.

Make an appointment to come in and meet with me during my office hours.

Contact the Academic Resource Center (ARC) for support: Academic Resource Center, Liberal Arts – Room 7 Phone: 508.999.8708, Fax: 508.910.6404

Technical Help

If you are in need of technical assistance the IT Service Desk is available to students. Claire T. Carney Library, lower level 508.999.8884 (x8884).