

PHIL 100
Introduction to Philosophy

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North Central College
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Office: Goldspohn G18
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DESCRIPTION

An examination of philosophical issues pertaining to knowledge, reality, and morality. We will consider questions from many of the main branches of philosophy (Logic, Epistemology, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Phenomenology, Ethics). Topics may include the following: Can we know anything with certainty, and if so, how? Does God exist? Does the possibility of morality depend upon the existence of God? What does it mean to consider ourselves free? How do philosophers explain the experience of Others?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Critically summarize and discuss (via well-grounded arguments) their own understanding of a diverse range of philosophical problems and positions, in both writing and discussion.
- Analyze, synthesize, and situate multiple texts in the service of developing their own ideas.
- Formulate complex, stakes-filled inquiries supported by properly integrated evidence.
- Develop responsible and generative research methods.
- Compose an articulate and well-argued essay presenting philosophical positions in a way that critically addresses fundamental issues and questions. This includes writing an effective thesis statement, supplying strong supporting arguments, making an effective use of language, and successfully incorporating and citing source material.

TEXTBOOK

Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy* ([Gutenberg](#) (read) | [Librivox](#) (audio)).

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues* (Hackett, 1979)

Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett, 1993).

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett, 1993).

All other readings and materials will be made available in PDF format.

ASSIGNMENTS

Short assignments — 30% of your grade.

Throughout the course, you will be required to complete short writing assignments that respond to our readings, and train different aspects of the writing process (e.g. exegesis, argumentation analysis, compare/contrast, etc.), or analyze the philosophical content of films or other cultural materials. Some of these will be “Discussion” posts submitted online, others will be presented during class time during our collective discussions.

Quizzes — 15% of your grade

There will be four short in-class quizzes throughout the term. These are designed to help motivate students to keep up on the readings, while also focusing their reading on key elements in the texts. While the questions will sometimes be circulated in advance, other times they may not.

Midterm essay — 25% of your grade.

The midterm will be a 5-6 page take-home essay assignment. This assignment will focus on exegesis of key texts, analysis of argumentation, as well as comparison of contrasting positions. The assignment will incorporate in-class peer review modules (worth 5% of the assignment), allowing students to evaluate one another's work and collaborate in the revision and refinement of the essay-writing process.

Final essay — 30% of your grade.

The final paper will be a 7-8 page take-home essay assignment. This assignment will have the same structure as the midterm, while also incorporating the use of scholarly secondary source material discovered by the students and (in some cases) application of course themes to events in the world.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction & course overview

- Russell: Ch. I-II

Week 2: Arguments and Logic in Philosophy

- Russell: Ch. III
 - Berkeley, *Three Dialogues* (First Dialogue)
 - *An Illustrated Book of Fallacies* ([online](#))
- Short assignment #1 (fallacies)*

Week 3: Epistemology – Perception and Knowledge

- Russell, Ch. IV
- Berkeley, *Three Dialogues* (Second and Third Dialogue)
- Quiz 1*

Week 4: Epistemology: Doubt and Certainty

- Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method* (1637), Part I (pp. 3-11) [on Canvas]
 - Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 1-2
- Short assignment #2 (doubt)*

Recommended:

- Watch *The Matrix* (1999) dir. by the Wachowskis
- BBC Podcast on Descartes ([online](#))

Week 5: Epistemology: Doubt and Certainty

- Russell, Ch. V
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 3-4, and Meditation 6

Week 6: Women Philosophers and the Challenge to Reason

- Atherton, *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period* (1994), Introduction and Elisabeth of Bohemia (pp. 1-21)
- Susan Bordo, “The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought” (1986)

Optional: Irigaray, “Is the Subject of Science Sexed?” (1985)

Week 7: Epistemology: Skepticism

- Russell, Ch. VI-VII
- Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Ch. 1-4 (pp. 1-37)
Short Assignment #3 (induction)

Recommended: BBC Podcast on Hume ([online](#))

Week 8: Epistemology: Skepticism

- Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Ch. VII (pp. 39-53), Ch. XII (pp. 102-114)
Quiz 2

Week 9: The Scope and Limits of Knowledge

- Russell, Ch. VIII
- Kant: *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (Preface and Preamble §§1-5)
Short Assignment #3: Short passage summary

Week 10: The Scope and Limits of Knowledge | Midterm paper

- Kant: *Prolegomena* (cont'd)
Midterm paper peer review workshop

Week 11: Philosophy of Religion: the Problem of Evil

- Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism”
- Peterson, “Attributes of God” ([online](#))
- Film – *God on Trial*
Short Assignment # 4

Week 12: Philosophy of Religion: the Nietzschean Challenge

- Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”; *The Gay Science* (selections)
Short Assignment # 5
Film Response Assignment due

Week 13: Truth, Nihilism, Politics

- Heidegger, “Nietzsche and Nihilism”
- Arendt, “Truth and Politics”
- Shapin, “Is There a Crisis of Truth?” ([online](#))

Short assignment # 6

Week 14: Human Freedom I: Existence

- Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”; *Being and Nothingness* (selections)

Quiz 4 in class

Week 15: Human Freedom II: The Other

- De Beauvoir, “Woman as Other,” from *The Second Sex*
Short Assignment #7: argument extraction/ response due

Recommended:

Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*”; “Why is the idea of ‘gender’ provoking backlash the world over?” ([online](#))

Week 15: The Value of Philosophy | Final paper

- Russell, Ch. XV

In-class Final Paper Workshop

Week 16: Final Paper Peer Review; Wrap-up Discussion