



PHILOSOPHY 101

Introduction to Philosophy

STUDENT COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2021 | 5 Credits

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Matthew Owen | mowen@yvcc.edu | (509) 480-0966

Office Hours: Please know that I am here to help you and am eager to do so. The best way to reach me is via email. Since our course is online (during Covid) and I will not often be physically present in my office, please email me to set up a time to virtually meet for office hours. Please feel free to contact me about any questions. I'll do my best to respond within 48 hours during the work week.

Course Description

Introduction to Philosophy exposes students to major tools, problems, and domains of philosophy. Students engage in the activity of philosophizing through the use of historical and contemporary readings. Questions addressed include: Are my beliefs all a matter of opinion? What is reality? What is truth? Does God exist? Am I free? Does science give us knowledge? Prerequisite: Eligibility for English 095 or instructor permission. *Institutional Assessment - In addition to the content of each discipline, YVC emphasizes the development of the following three outcomes: Communication (C), Computation/Analytical Reasoning (C/AR) and Human Relations (HR). As a student, your abilities may be assessed in one or more of these outcome areas. For further information, refer to general education outcomes in the catalog.*

Abilities Developed

1. Analytic Reasoning (AR): is the ability to consider an issue, idea, or concept systematically and assess the component parts and their application.
2. Communication (C): is the ability to organize ideas and concepts clearly and logically.
3. Historical Perspective (HP): identify relevant historical influences.

Course Outcomes

Outcome One: Students will be able to recognize philosophical problems and tools for approaching them.

Objective a: Examine and analyze arguments for various philosophical positions (AR).

Objective b: Distinguish definition types and their applicability to philosophical problem-solving in specific contexts (AR).

Outcome Two: Students will be able to identify the major reasons for adherence to various historically held philosophical perspectives in a variety of different contexts.

Objective a: Identify the specific steps in reasoning, and the justification given for them, by individual philosophers (AR).

Objective b: Identify specific philosophers, together with relevant features in their historical-cultural setting, in conjunction with a variety of philosophical arguments.

Outcome Three: Students will be able to participate in philosophical discussions and contribute to them through the use of dialectical reasoning.

Objective a: Apply philosophical reasoning intrapersonally by identifying and assessing personally endorsed claims and their coherence with other claims with which they may be in conflict.

Objective b: Apply course material to construct and defend argumentative cases in various contexts written from different perspectives. Apply course material to critically evaluate the arguments of others (AR).

Course Assignments

7 Discussion Posts (8 points each | **56 points total**): Throughout the quarter there are seven required discussion posts on Canvas, each including one original post and at least one reply to another original post by one's fellow classmate. For each discussion, the instructor will provide a discussion prompt that includes information about what each discussion is about and the content each original post needs to include. The discussion prompts will often focus on the *required course readings* but might also focus on content from course lectures. Each student is to provide *one original post* that is in response to the discussion prompt and then at least *one reply* to a fellow student's original post. The seven required Discussion Posts are worth 8 points each, for a total of 56 points, which is 56% of one's overall course grade. The posts will be graded on: (1) How well informed by the relevant course material (i.e. the required reading and lectures) they are and (2) Whether they reflect serious thought about that material as well as other posts in the discussion. Doing well in this course requires thoughtful, informed contributions to these discussions, which in turn requires reading the assigned readings and watching the lectures. Original posts are due by Thursday at midnight the week each discussion is assigned and the replies are due by Saturday at midnight that same week.

3 Quizzes (10 points | **30 points**): Throughout the quarter, there are three required quizzes. The course quizzes are on the lecture content and the required course readings. The three required quizzes are worth 10 points each for a total of 30 points. These quizzes are worth 30% of each student's overall course grade and are therefore vital to success in the course.

Final Paper (14 points): Each student is required to write their own 3-4 page paper on one of the 21 philosophical topics listed below. The student is to choose and focus on one of the topics in their paper and defend a position on that topic. The beginning of the paper should clarify what topic the paper is about, the position being argued for, and the main counter positions on the topic. The body of the paper should provide reasons for the position being argued for and address a major objection to that position. The conclusion should clarify important implications of the position argued for. Papers must be submitted with 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, and contain Chicago style citations.

Topic 1: Can we know reality as it is?

Topic 2: What is science and is it the only source of knowledge?

Topic 3: Are there objective moral facts or is morality relative?

Topic 4: What does it mean to be a good person?

Topic 5: Does God exist?

Topic 6: What makes us human?

Topic 7: Are human persons merely physical beings?

Topic 8: Do human persons have freewill?

Topic 9: Can a computer be conscious?

Topic 10: Will artificial intelligence enhance inequality?

Topic 11: What makes artificial intelligence artificial?

Topic 12: Are sexbots ethical?

Topic 13: Are brain organoids conscious and is it ethical to produce them for experiments?

Topic 14: Is abortion morally permissible?

Topic 15: Is euthanasia morally permissible?

Topic 16: Is artificial mental enhancement morally permissible?

Topic 17: What is the meaning of life?

Topic 18: What is the role of government?

Topic 19: Does free speech benefit individuals or society?

Topic 20: Is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s view of justice consistent with moral relativism?

Topic 21: What is a government's role in protecting the environment?

Course Requirements & Grading

This course includes lectures, class discussion, quizzes, and a final exam. The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and course content according to the needs of the class.

Grading Scale:

| | |
|----|----------|
| A | 93-100% |
| A- | 90-92.9% |
| B+ | 87-89.9% |
| B | 83-86.9% |
| B- | 80-82.9% |
| C+ | 77-79.9% |
| C | 75-76.9% |
| C- | 71-74.9% |
| D+ | 67-70.9% |
| D | 60-66.9% |
| F | 0-59.9% |

Table: Required Assignments

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 Discussion Posts | 8 points each / 56 points total |
| 3 Quizzes | 10 points each / 30 points total |
| Final Paper | 14 points |
| Total | 100 points |

Required Textbook

- (1) Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, Elizabeth Harman, and Seana Shiffrin. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, Second Edition. W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Additional Required Readings (provided by instructor)

- (2) Fiona Andreallo, 'Robots with benefits: how sexbots are marketed as companions,' *The Conversation: academic rigor, journalistic flair*, November 13, 2019. [link](#)
- (3) Matthew Owen, 'Cerebral Organoids: Conscious Subjects or Zombies?' [link](#)
- (4) Matthew Owen, 'Does Neuroscience Say Madonna is a Material Girl?' *Blog of the American Philosophical Association*. [link](#)
- (5) Matthew Owen, 'Martin Luther King Jr.'s View of Metaethics and Normative Ethics,' *Blog of the American Philosophical Association*. [link](#)
- (6) Augustine, *City of God*, X.3; XI.26
- (7) Martin Luther King, Jr. 'Letter From a Birmingham Jail.'

Course Schedule

Please see the following page for the course schedule, which the instructor reserves the right to change according to the needs of the class.

| week | TOPICS | READING | DUE |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 9/20 | Course introduction what's philosophy? why study it? | (1) pp. xxvii-liv | Discussion Posts 1 |
| Fundamental Branches | | | |
| 2 9/27 | Epistemology truth nature of knowledge possibility of knowledge sources of knowledge | (1) Ch. 6 (6) XI.26 | Discussion Posts 2 |
| 3 10/4 | Metaphysics existence essences universals Plato vs. Aristotle | (1) Ch. 10 | Quiz 1 |
| 4 10/11 | Ethics relativism vs. objectivism Mill: utilitarianism Kant: deontological ethics Aristotle: virtue ethics Aquinas: natural law | (1) pp. 844-894 (5) all | Discussion Posts 3 |
| Sub-Topics | | | |
| 5 10/18 | Philosophy of Religion faith & reason arguments for God's existence arguments against God's existence problem of evil | (1) Ch. 1 | Discussion Posts 4 |
| 6 10/25 | Philosophy of Mind & Human Ontology what are we? physicalism vs. dualism mind and brain personal agency and mental causation | (1) Ch. 11 (4) all | Quiz 2 |

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|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 7 11/1 | Philosophy of AI nature of artificial intelligence possibility of machine consciousness ethical issues: engineer vs. machine liability machine rights sexbots enhancing inequality | (1) pp. 341-348, 356-365, 384-392 (2) all | Discussion Posts 5 |
| 8 11/8 | Bioethics abortion euthanasia cerebral organoids mental enhancement | (1) pp. 696-713 (3) all | Discussion Posts 6 |
| 9 11/15 | Meaning of Human Life Socrates: examined life Epicurus: moderate hedonism Albert Camus: absurdity Augustine: knowing God Transhumanism | (1) Ch. 19 (6) X.3 | Discussion Posts 7 |
| 10 11/29 | Political Philosophy & Justice Thomas Hobbes on justification of state John Locke on justification of state Mills / Rawls on liberalism MLK, Jr. on justice | (1) pp. 1028-1045, 1083-1096 (7) all | Quiz 3 |
| 11 12/6 | Finals Week | | Final Paper |

Word of Encouragement

Critical thinking applies to everything we do. If you want to become better at everything you do, become better at critical thinking. Philosophy helps you do just that, and this course is designed to help you grow as a critical thinker. For many, this will be a challenging course. After all, philosophy and critical thinking are inherently challenging. Nevertheless, this course is designed and structured so that every student who diligently puts in the hard work required will have success in the course and ultimately grow in their thinking skills.

Students With Disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with your instructor as soon as possible. The office location is in Sundquist Hall. Office hours vary according to clinical and classroom schedules, please call the Nursing Department at 574-4902 or the instructor's number provided on page 1 of this syllabus. General information on disability accommodation may also be obtained through Disabled Student Services located in Deccio Higher Education Building C138 or by calling 574-4961.

General Policies

Exams: Attendance is required for all scheduled exams and quizzes. Students who arrive late for an exam may not be admitted to the room and may have to reschedule to take the exam at the instructor's discretion. Students who are not in class for quizzes or who arrive after the quiz has been distributed, will be unable to take the quiz at that time and rescheduling is at the discretion of the instructor. Students who are late to exams or quizzes will complete a Performance Improvement Plan. Continuation of this problem may result in failure of the course and/or program dismissal. Students are not to leave the room during the exam. If students anticipate personal problems that might interrupt them during an exam, this should be discussed with the instructor **prior** to the beginning of the exam. If the student anticipates needing to use the restroom during testing, notify the instructor **prior** beginning of the test. Students who have emergencies that prevent them from being in class for an exam or quiz are required to notify the instructor **prior** to the scheduled exam. Re-scheduled exams must be taken within 24 hours of original time unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

Students that do not notify lead instructor of anticipated absence and do not attend required exam will complete a Performance Improvement Plan. The student that had a "no call, no show" incident may not be allowed to reschedule the exam; this will be at the discretion of the lead instructor. Continuation of this problem may result in failure of the course and/or program dismissal. Examinations may only be taken **once**, no repeat exams are offered.

Cell Phones: All cell phones are to be turned off before class begins. During exams, cell phones are to be placed in the student's purse or backpack. Students who are anticipating emergency calls should discuss this with the instructor **prior** to the beginning of class.

Course Withdrawal: In order to withdraw from this course, an instructor's signature is required. It is the student's responsibility to secure an add/drop slip from the Registrar's office and fill it out completely. If a student withdraws from the course after taking the second exam, the student will receive the grade at the time of withdrawal on his/her nursing program records. The nursing program records are taken into consideration when a student appeals to the admission and progression committee. Refer to the Nursing Program Student Handbook for further information about admission, withdrawal, and progression information.