

PHIL 103: Five Big Ideas (1.5 units)

Course Information:

PHIL 103 (CRN 22509)

Course Schedule: MR 11:30am – 12:50pm in ECS 124

Prerequisites: None

Course website and readings: On Brightspace

Instructor Information:

Name: Dr. Audrey Yap (she/they) (call me Audrey, Dr. Yap, or Prof. Yap)

Email: ayap@uvic.ca

Office: CLE B307

Appointments: In-person drop-in hours Thursdays 10am-11am

Zoom appointments can be booked on Wednesdays 9:30am-10:30am using the following link: <https://calendly.com/ayap/office>

If those options don't work for you, please email me with some suggested dates and times.

Territorial Acknowledgement (Contributed by Scow and Underwood):

The University of Victoria is situated on the unceded territory of the lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. This is their land—a reality that all of us who have come here must acknowledge. We must also recognize how our presence here interrupts ancient ways of being in this world. We all have a responsibility to prevent further intrusion into lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ lives and, if called upon, to support expressions of lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ nationhood. We must also recognize that we are living on someone's home—spread across Greater Victoria are the hunting and fishing grounds, village sites and ceremonial places of Salish people, and we must acknowledge how our presence here can either disrupt or repair the relationships between the original people and their territory.

Course Logistics:

Course website and all readings posted on Brightspace (<https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home>)

While course will be taught face-to-face, all assignments will be turned in through the course website, and lecture components of each week's instruction will be recorded and posted. In-class activities including class discussion will not be recorded. Philosophy isn't just something you learn by listening to a professor talk about it, or by reading a book, it's also something you need to *do*. As a result, your classes are going to be structured with a mixture of activities in mind. You can expect some classes to have more lecture-style content, while others will involve activities like small group discussion, depending on what our goals for that particular week might be.

Learning Objectives and Strategies:

This course is an introduction to philosophy through some questions that many of us have probably asked during the course of our lives. The first place we're going to start is with the question of who we think we are – what makes us the particular people that we are? And

how much control do we really have over that? The class will next consider the fact that we often change over time, sometimes so much that we casually say things like, “I’m not the same person that I was back then.” But how do we make sense of those kinds of statements? After that, we’ll consider our relationships to our bodies. Our bodies are certainly a big part of what make us who we are, but what are some of the factors that shape that, and the ways we have bodies in the first place? Fourth, we’ll turn to our relationships with others, and the question of how we care for others, both human and non. We’ll end the semester with a consideration of the future. We’re all human beings in a complicated world that has a lot of injustice in it. So, the last philosophical question we’ll think through together during the semester is how we might be able to work for better futures.

My goal as your instructor is to help you achieve the following learning objectives during this semester together:

- Familiarity with a variety of contemporary philosophical views and ways of engaging with real-world problems.
- The ability to understand and clearly explain philosophical ideas and arguments.
- The ability to write both sensitively and rigorously about topics that can be very personal and relate to our everyday lives.

Assessment:

There will be two midterm assignments, each worth 25% of your grade, and a final assignment worth 40%. The remaining 10% will be based on regular engagement with the class material.

Engagement:

Each week you'll have the opportunity to earn an engagement point. Earning 10 of these points will get you full marks for engagement, which means that missing a few weeks will not negatively impact your grade. The activities that will earn you an engagement mark each week might vary from asynchronous commenting on a reading or participation in a class activity. The objective for this is continuing engagement in the class, so **no extensions on engagement marks** will be given. However, you will have at least 12 opportunities to gain engagement points, which means that you can miss at least 2 with no penalty.

Assignments:

The midterm and final assignments will all be take-home and open book work. At least two weeks before the submission deadline, the assignment questions will be released. Assignment questions will typically take the form of essays where you will be asked to outline and apply the ideas we have been learning about. There will also be some creative assignment options given, where you might choose to illustrate some aspect of an author's view through a written or visual story, or where you might report on your experiences trying to apply something that we have discussed in your own life.

Essays for the midterm assignments will be approximately 750-1000 words or 3 double spaced pages. Essays for the final assignment will be approximately 1000-1250 words or 3-5 pages.

However, I know that sometimes things do not go as planned. You may have **3 days' worth of extensions on assignments**, to be distributed among the assignments as you like. Please let me know before the due date if you are using an extension, and how long an extension you need, though you do not need to tell me why you need it. If you end up needing more than 3 days' worth of extensions during the semester, I highly encourage you to make an appointment with me to talk about how we can plan for you to keep up with the course schedule.

Completing at least one midterm as well as the final assignment means that you will be considered to have **completed the course**. If you do not turn in at least this amount of work, this will result in an N grade regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course.

| Gradeable Item | Description | Value | Total |
|---------------------|--|---------------------|-------|
| Engagement | Continuing engagement with the material, assessed weekly | 1% x 10 weeks | 10% |
| Midterm Assignments | Short essays or creative projects about the readings | 25% x 2 assignments | 50% |
| Final Assignment | Medium length essay or creative project about the readings | 40% | 40% |
| | | Total | 100% |

Final course grades will be given as percentile marks, in accordance with the standard university grading scheme:

<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/S1AAgoGuV?bc=true&bcCurrent=16%20-%20Grading&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies>.

Academic Integrity:

You are welcome and encouraged to talk to others about your assignments. They are also entirely open book, which means you can consult any past lectures, notes, or course material, with the understanding that you are ultimately responsible for all the content that you submit. You do not need to cite lectures, but you do need to cite readings. You may not, however, use generative AI for this class, and its use is a violation of academic integrity, and any work produced by it will **not be given credit**. More importantly, using it will not actually help you learn the skills we're working on. If there is something you genuinely think you would need it for, I'd encourage you instead to come talk to me about how the course could be more accessible for you.

I teach this course under the assumption that you are here to learn. If you are having trouble with the material, then my expectation is that you will ask me for help or for an extension instead of using a generative AI tool.

You can find UVic's policy on Academic Integrity here:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V

Conduct and Communication:

I do not run a formal classroom and I do not insist on titles. You can refer to me as Dr. Yap, Professor Yap, or Audrey, and I genuinely have no preference which you use. She and they are both correct pronouns for me, and if you think I wouldn't know which pronouns you use, please don't hesitate to make me aware.

Email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of class time, particularly if you have any official requests. If you ask me a question over email, you can expect a reply within about 1 working day. If you don't hear back from me after that time frame, feel free to try again in case your message went astray. If you are nervous about sending me an email or asking a question, feel free to include a picture of a puppy (or cute animal of your choice) with your request. This will not affect whether I will be able to help you with your request but will give you an excuse to look for pictures of puppies or other cute creatures. In fact, it will make me happy to know that you have read the course outline to this point, so feel free to send me a picture of a cute animal now.

I also consider you to be the best authority on your needs in the classroom. That means if you need to do things like eat or drink during class, leave the room, knit, stim, or anything else, the only thing I ask is that you respect others in the room and try not to distract them.

Course Schedule:

Week One (Jan 5, 8): Introductions, Reading Philosophy
Readings: David Concepción, "How To Read Philosophy"

Week Two (Jan 12, 15): Question Zero: What Is Philosophy For and How Do We Do It?
Readings: Mary Midgley, "Philosophical Plumbing"
Wendell Berry, "Why I Am not Going to Buy a Computer"

Week Three (Jan 19, 22): Question One: Who Am I?
Reading: Ladelle McWhorter, "Introduction: The Question of How to Live" in *Unbecoming Persons*

Week Four (Jan 26, 29): Question One: Who Am I?
Reading: Andrea Westlund, "Who Do We Think We Are?"

Assignment One Due Jan 31

Week Five (Feb 2,5): Question Two: Am I Always the Same Person?

Reading: Susan Brison, "Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity" (note: this reading discusses the author's experiences of sexual violence)

Week Six (Feb 9, 12): Question Two: Am I Always the Same Person?

Reading: Maria Lugones, "Playfulness, World-Traveling, and Loving Perception"

Week Seven: Reading Break

Week Eight (Feb 23, 26): Question Three: What is This Body?

Reading: Lisa Heldke, "It's Chomping All the Way Down"

Week Nine (Mar 2, 5): Question Three: What is This Body?

Reading: Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl"

Assignment Two Due Mar 8

Week Ten (Mar 9, 12): Question Four: How Should I Care for Others?

Reading: Vida Yao, "Grace and Alienation"

Week Eleven (Mar 16, 19): Question Four: How Should I Care for Others?

Reading: Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics"

Week Twelve (Mar 23, 26): Question Five: How Do Things Get Better?

Reading: Mary Midgley, "Getting Rid of the Ego"

Week Thirteen (Mar 30, Apr 2): Question Five: How Do Things Get Better?

Olufemi Taiwo, "The Arc of the Moral Universe" in *Reconsidering Reparations*

Final Assignment Due April 12

Other Resources:

Student Resources

- a. [UVic Learn Anywhere](#). UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students that offers many learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.
- b. [Library resources](#). Information for students wishing to use the UVic library.
- c. [Student wellness resources](#)
- d. [Ombudsperson](#) A resource to help resolve disputes or complaints.
- e. Indigenous student services ([ISS](#))
- f. Centre for Academic Communication ([CAC](#))
- g. Math & Stats Assistance Centre ([MSAC](#))
- h. Learning Strategies Program ([LSP](#))
- i. [Other student groups and resources](#)
- j. [Academic Concession Regulations](#)
- k. [Academic Concession and Accommodation](#)
- l. Academic accommodation & access for students with disabilities – [Policy AC1205](#)

University statements and policies

- a. University Calendar - Section "[Information for all students](#)"
- b. [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)
- c. [Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)
- d. [Student Conduct](#)
- e. [Non-academic Student Misconduct](#)
- f. [Accessibility](#)
- g. [Diversity / EDI](#)
- h. [Equity statement](#)
- i. [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- j. Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)