

Introduction to Philosophy



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Course Description

The aim of this course is to get you involved in the activity of philosophy. We will spend our time thinking about some of life's big questions, working to understand how some great thinkers have tried to answer them and critically examining our own answers to them. What is the nature of reality? Is it something we can have knowledge of? Does God exist? Can we justify our beliefs? What are minds? What is consciousness? What makes something morally right or wrong? How ought we to live? What (if anything) makes it true that you are the same person today that you were yesterday? Do human beings have free will? What makes a life meaningful? Is life absurd?

We will approach all of these questions philosophically. That means we will remain open to reason, articulating the questions and the answers as clearly and carefully as we can and critically assessing the answers we have with an eye to finding more satisfying responses.

Texts

You will need these books:

For both terms	Stephen Stich and Tom Donaldson. Philosophy: Asking Questions—Seeking Answers. Oxford University Press. 2019. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through RedShelf (redshelf.com).
For the first term	John Perry. A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality. Hackett Publishing. 1978. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through RedShelf (redshelf.com).
For the second term	Daniel C. Dennett. Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting. MIT Press. 2015. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through Kobo (kobo.com).

All the other readings will be available on-line through the course Brightspace page.

Class Meetings

All of our class meetings in the fall term will be conducted over Zoom. You can attend the meetings live at 10:30 Pacific Time on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, or you can watch the video of the class meeting later through the course Brightspace page. You'll find the link to join the live meetings on the Brightspace page. The same link will work for the duration of the course.

Office Hours

I'll be available to meet with you on Zoom during scheduled office hours or by appointment. Before each writing assignment we will have extended office hours to help you with the assignment.

Technical Help

You'll find a link to the Zoom Help Center on Brightspace along with a link to UVic's *Learn Anywhere* site. That site is designed to help students navigate all aspects of UVic's online learning environment. Don't hesitate to ask me for help with any technical issues you run into. If I can't help I'll find someone who can.

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Brightspace

To access the course materials on Brightspace go to brightspace.uvic.ca and log in with your regular Netlink ID. If you have difficulty accessing Brightspace or if a link to a particular reading is malfunctioning, please let me know by email right away so that I can take care of the problem.

The Brightspace page contains all sorts of information you will need for the course. It contains the class videos, most of the course readings, details about how much of particular texts you need to read, the quizzes and writing assignments, a calendar of assignments, a class list with email links, your grades and various supplementary materials.

Please add a photo of yourself to your Brightspace profile. This is not required, but in a large class it is very helpful.

Any changes that need to be made to the course schedule during the term will appear on the Brightspace page.

Course Work

First Term

Four Writing Assignments	7.25% each
Four Quizzes	4% each
One Exercise	5%

Second Term

Four Writing Assignments	7.25% each
Four Quizzes	4% each
One Exercise	5%

Writing Assignments

Each writing assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to engage with the course material while developing particular philosophical skills. For each one we will have an in-class workshop to prepare you to tackle the assignment.

	Topic	Philosophical Work
WA 1 9/29	Ethics	Apply a theory to a particular case and evaluate its success
WA 2 10/20	Personal Identity	Identify an argument; check for validity and soundness
WA 3 11/20	Perception	Use an example to support an argument
WA 4 12/2	Knowledge and Reality	Do a comparative evaluation of theories
WA 5 TBA	Free Will and Control	Develop an argument by analogy; consider an objection
WA 6 TBA	Evidence and Belief	Explain the debate between two philosophers with divergent criteria
WA 7 TBA	Minds and Machines	Evaluate the success of an objection
WA 8 TBA	Existential Crisis	Do a comparative evaluation of practical advice

These writing assignments are very short papers (ranging from 250 to 600 words). Specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on the course Brightspace page. It is very important to read and follow those instructions. *Each assignment will have specific criteria which must be met to receive credit.*

It is best to do the writing assignments on the basis of your own reading of the text and our class discussion of related ideas. If you choose to consult any other sources and use any quotations, phrases *or ideas* that you did not come up with on your own, you *must* cite your sources. See the note on **Academic Integrity** below.

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Submitting Writing Assignments

Your writing assignments must be submitted on-line through Brightspace. Specific instructions and times submissions are due are posted on Brightspace along with the detailed descriptions of the assignments.

Unexcused late submissions will immediately lose 5% and will lose an additional 5% every 24 hours. If you are submitting your assignment late and the lateness was unavoidable, let me know so that we can waive the late penalty.

Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice and fill in the blank quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. Each quiz will be available on Brightspace for 8 hours. So you can choose when in that 8 hour window you want to take it. But once you open the quiz you will have only 30 minutes to submit your answers. Information about what to expect on individual quizzes will be posted on Brightspace. If you miss a quiz due to illness or exceptional circumstance contact me immediately to schedule a make-up quiz.

Exercises

For each of the exercises you will be asked to briefly explain two competing theories (two paragraphs) and offer a comparative evaluation of them (one paragraph). Group submissions will be an option.

Grading

Grades for the course will be assigned using the UVIC Undergraduate Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade
90 - 100	A+
85 - 89	A
80 - 84	A-
77 - 79	B+
73 - 76	B
70 - 72	B-
65 - 69	C+
60 - 64	C
50 - 59	D
Below 50	N or F

A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically **superior**, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations.

B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates **good** comprehension of the course material, good command of the skills needed to work with it, and full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application.

C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an **adequate** comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.

D is earned by work that indicates **minimal** command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

N indicates that the course requirements were not completed.

Academic Integrity

The University Policy on Academic Integrity (covering plagiarism, multiple submission, unauthorized use of an editor, falsifying materials, cheating and aiding others to cheat) will be enforced in this course. **You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the policy.** You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policies?group=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations>

If you have any doubts about what this policy requires or any questions about whether or not you are complying with it, please don't hesitate to ask me about it.

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Course Schedule

Any changes to this schedule will be posted on the Brightspace page.

“S&D” stands for Stich and Donaldson’s **Philosophy: Asking Questions—Seeking Answers**.

Readings not in S&D or in the texts by Dennett and Perry can be found through the Brightspace page.

First Term

Introduction

W 9/9	S&D Chapter 1: <i>What is philosophy?</i>
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Logic

F 9/11	S&D Chapter 2: <i>What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?</i>
T 9/15	<i>continued</i>

Ethics and the Good Life

W 9/16	Introduction to Ethics
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F 9/18	Quiz 1 Logic Epicurus <i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> S&D Chapter 13: <i>What really matters?</i> , Sections 1 & 2
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T 9/22	Workshop for Writing Assignment 1
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W 9/23	S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Sections 4 & 5 Kant Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals , Section One
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F 9/25	<i>continued</i>
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T 9/29	Writing Assignment One Due S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Sections 1—3 Mill from Utilitarianism , Chapter Two
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W 9/30	<i>continued</i>
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F 10/2	S&D Chapter 14: What should we do? (Part I), Section 6 The Trolley Problem (video)
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T 10/6	S&D Chapter 12: Are there objective truths about right and wrong?, Sections 1, 2 & 4 Saul <i>Feminism and Respect for Cultures</i>
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W 10/7	Exercise 1 Due S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Sections 1 & 2 (duty to aid)
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F 10/9	S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Section 3 (eating meat)
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Ethics and the Good Life *continued*

T 10/13 S&D Chapter 15: What should we do? (Part II), Section 4 (abortion)

W 10/14 **Quiz 2 Ethics**

Review

Searching for the Self

F 10/16 Perry **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**, *The First Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Sections 1—3

T 10/20 *Workshop for Writing Assignment 2*

T 10/20 **Writing Assignment 2 Due**

Perry **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**, *The Second Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Section 4

W 10/21 Perry **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**, *The Third Night*
S&D Chapter 11: *Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive your death?* Section 5

F 10/23 Velleman *So It Goes*

Knowledge and Reality

T 10/27 Plato **Meno**

W 10/28 **Quiz 3 Personal Identity**
Meno continued

F 10/30 Plato **Phaedo**
Russell *The World of Universals*

T 11/3 Descartes **Meditations on First Philosophy**, Meditation One
S&D Chapter 13: *What really matters?*, Sections 1—3

W 11/4 Descartes **Meditations on First Philosophy**, Meditation Two
S&D Chapter 13: *What really matters?*, Section 4

F 11/6 *continued*

Reading Break 11/9 — 11/11 No Classes

F 11/13 Descartes **Meditations on First Philosophy**, Meditations Three through Six
S&D Chapter 5: *Can we be completely certain about anything?*, Sections 5—9

T 11/17 *continued*
Workshop for Writing Assignment 3

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Knowledge and Reality *continued*

W 11/18	Russell <i>Appearance and Reality, The Existence of Matter</i>
F 11/20	Writing Assignment Three Due Locke from An Essay Concerning Human Understanding S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 1—3
T 11/24	Berkeley Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous , First Dialogue S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 4 & 5
W 11/25	Berkeley Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous , Third Dialogue
F 11/27	Quiz 4 Knowledge and Reality S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> , Sections 6—7
T 12/1	Workshop for Writing Assignment 4
W 12/2	Writing Assignment Four Due

Second Semester Topics (Schedule TBA)

Free Will
Philosophy of Religion and the Ethics of Belief
Philosophy of Science
Philosophy of Mind
The Good Life and the Meaning of Life

Territory Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Equity

Uvic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN>. If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.

Religious Accommodation

Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policies?group=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations>

Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/Unln/UARe/PoAcl.html>). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.