

PHILOSOPHY 100

Introduction to Philosophy

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Office Hours: Monday and Thursday, 2:30-4:00 and by appointment; Office hours will be held via Zoom:
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The Instructor:

I was interested in philosophy from an early age. Even as a student at Burnaby North High School, I was reading (though not understanding) philosophers, including Plato. I knew going into university that I wanted to study philosophy. (This is very unusual; most students come to philosophy after deciding that they don't like whatever they initially planned to study.) After receiving my B.A. at Simon Fraser University, I completed an M.A. at the University of Waterloo in Ontario and a Ph.D. at Boston University. I taught for a year at the University of Calgary before coming to the University of Victoria. I was also a research fellow for a year at Melbourne University in Australia. I have been a visiting scholar at the Universidad de Murcia (Spain) and a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Durham University (England).

My initial area of philosophical research was aimed at answering the question 'What is truth?' and this was the subject of my first book, *Global Anti-realism* (1995). I have subsequently written several books on philosophy of art including *Art and Knowledge* (2001) and *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (2008) *Critique of Pure Music* (2014), *Filosofía de la Música. Respuestas a Peter Kivy* (2017) and *Radically Rethinking Copyright in the Arts* (2020). I have edited three collections of essays, translated Charles Batteux's *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle* (2015) and (with my colleague Margaret Cameron) *Jean-Baptist's Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* (2021). I have published more than 60 papers in scholarly journals. I was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2015.

I am passionate about philosophy and I hope to convey some of my passion to you.

Outline

For most students, this will be their first exposure to philosophy and you may have no clear conception of what you are about to study. Unfortunately, the nature of philosophy is itself a matter of philosophical dispute and many definitions of philosophy have been proposed. I like

Wilfred Sellars' account of philosophy: "The aim of philosophy is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term."

More specifically, philosophy is the study of a series of enduring questions. In this course, we will ask fundamental questions about the nature of reality, value, beauty and knowledge. Students will be introduced to the principal problems and schools of the Western philosophical tradition. Issues in ethics, social and political philosophy, epistemology (theory of knowledge), metaphysics (theory of the basic nature of reality) and aesthetics (philosophy of art) will be addressed.

Course objectives:

Students will be asked to develop the abilities to write clearly, to analyse and criticise arguments, and to construct their own arguments. Philosophy is widely recognized as the discipline best able to train students to think critically and logically. At the same time, students should develop an appreciation of the intrinsic importance and interest of philosophical questions.

Students will be encouraged to develop public speaking and debating skills by participating in discussions. Dialogue is an important part of the process of arriving at philosophical conclusions. You should feel free to offer comments and ask questions at any point. You should also feel free to provide reasons for doubting any assertion the instructor makes.

Format:

The plan is to have a standard, in person class. Discussion and questions are encouraged.

However, I will open a Zoom room at the beginning of every class:

<https://uvic.zoom.us/j/97463307203?pwd=NWRXM1hmNnN2U1dTZkdEdnM2ZmlEZz09>.

Lectures will be recorded and available via Brightspace.

If you are unwell, do not come to class. If you are required to self-isolate, do not come to class. If you have reason to believe that you may have come into contact with a person with covid-19, do not come to class. You will miss very little by attending the class via Zoom and you will not infect anyone.

Texts:

All readings are available online, free of charge.

Here are some places the readings may be found:

Plato, *Euthyphro*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html>

Plato, *Crito*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html>

Plato, *Phaedo*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1658>

Hume, 'Of the Immortality of the Soul,'

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/004780373.0001.000/1:3.2?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, <http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/descartes>

Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Correspondence

<http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/descartes>

Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, <http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/leibniz>

Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, <http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/berkeley>

Hume, *Enquiries*, <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfs/hume1748.pdf>

Paley, *Natural Theology*, [http://darwin-](http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=A142&viewtype=text&pageseq=1)

[online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=A142&viewtype=text&pageseq=1](http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemID=A142&viewtype=text&pageseq=1)

Locke, *Essay*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10615/10615-h/10615-h.htm#link2HCH0030>

Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, <https://archive.org/details/AlfredAyer>

Mill, *Utilitarianism; On Liberty*, <http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/mill>

Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," <http://earlymoderntexts.com/authors/hume>

Plato, *Republic*; <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.11.x.html>

Tolstoy, <http://www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r14.html>

Grading:

Students will write four essays of approximately 1500 words and a series of surprise quizzes. Two essays will be due before Christmas, and two in the second term. Students will write a total of fifteen surprise quizzes. The best ten grades on these quizzes will be used in the calculation of your final grade. Your ten best quizzes will be worth 20% of the course grade. Each of the four essays will be worth 20%. ***N.B.: In order to pass the course, students must submit all four essays and write at least eight quizzes. Otherwise you will be assigned an N grade. If you are having trouble completing the essays, please see the instructor as soon as possible.***

Four criteria will be used in assessing essays: (1) effective and correct use of the English language; (2) accurate presentation of the views of the philosophers discussed; (3) presentation of valid arguments; and (4) evidence of original thought. A first-class essay will be characterised by clear, grammatical prose and careful exegesis. It will display an appreciation of the strengths and

Readings: Plato, *Euthyphro*

Week Three 20 and 23 September

Topic: The authority of the state

Readings: Plato, *Crito*

Week Four 27 and 30 September

Topic: Is the soul immortal? (introduced)

Readings: Plato, *Phaedo*

Week Five 4 and 7 October

Topic: Is the soul immortal? (continued)

Readings: Plato, *Phaedo*; Hume, 'Of the Immortality of the Soul'

Week Six 14 October

Topic: Introduction to Descartes

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations 1 and 2*

Week Seven 18 and 21 October

Topic: What can we know?

Readings: Descartes, *Meditations 3 and 4*

Assignment: First essay due, 21 October

Week Eight 25 and 28 October

Topic: Does God exist? Are mind and body distinct?

Readings: *Meditations 5 and 6*; Elisabeth of Bohemia, Correspondence with Descartes

Week Nine 1 and 4 November

Topic: The rationalism of Leibniz

Readings: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*

Week Ten 8 November

Topic: Leibniz continued; Berkeley introduced

Readings: Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*

Week Eleven 15 and 18 November

Topic: God and Science in Berkeley's thought
Readings: Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*

Week Twelve 22 and 25 November

Topic: Introduction to Hume
Readings: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections 1 to 3

Week Thirteen 29 November and 2 December

Topic: Hume on causality; scepticism
Readings: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections 4 to 7
Assignment: Second essay due, 2 December

Second Term

Week One 6 January

Topic: Liberty, Necessity and Morality
Readings: *Enquiry* Sections 7 and 8

Week Two 10 and 13 January

Topic: Miracles and a Future State
Readings: *Enquiry* Sections 10 and 11; Paley, *Natural Religion*

Week Three 17 and 20 January

Topic: Scepticism
Readings: *Enquiry*, Section 12

Week Four 24 and 27 January

Topic: Identity and personal Identity
Readings: Locke, *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXVII

Week Five 31 January and 3 February

Topic: Introduction to logical positivism and the principle of verifiability
Readings: *Language, Truth and Logic* Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Week Six 7 and 10 February

Topic: Phenomenalism
Readings: *Language, Truth and Logic*, Chapters 4 and 5

Week Seven: Reading break

Week Eight 21 and 24 February

Topic: Positivist solutions to philosophical problems
Readings: *Language, Truth and Logic* Chapters 6 to 8
Assignment: Third essay due 24 February

Week Nine 28 February and 3 March

Topic: Utilitarianism
Readings: *Utilitarianism*

Week Ten 7 and 10 March

Topic: The Principle of Liberty
Readings: *On Liberty* Sections 1 to 3

Week Eleven 14 and 17 March

Topic: Individuals and the state; applications of the Principle of Liberty
Readings: *On Liberty* Sections 4 to 5

Week Twelve 21 and 24 March

Topic: What is Art?
Readings: Plato, *Republic*, Book X

Week Thirteen 28 and 31 March

Topic: What is Art?
Readings: ; Tolstoy, *What is Art?*

Week Fourteen 4 and 7 April

Topic: Evaluating art
Readings: Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”
Assignment: Final essay due 8 April

N.B.: This syllabus is tentative, and intended only to give students a rough guide to readings, dates and topics.