

# Introduction to Philosophy

**Instructor:** Karen Brown  
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**Office:** Clearihue Hall B 314  
**Office Hours:** T&W 11:30 am—12:00 pm in person  
 Th 8:00 am—8:50 am on Zoom

DRAFT  
 Not the official  
 course outline



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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**. Second Edition. Oxford University Press. 2024. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through Vital Source ([vitalsource.com](https://vitalsource.com)). (The 2019 edition has all the needed readings, though some section numbers have changed.)

Anthony Falikowski and Susan Mills. **Experiencing Philosophy**. Second Edition. Broadview Press. 2023. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through Vital Source ([vitalsource.com](https://vitalsource.com)).

For the  
first term

John Perry. **A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality**. Hackett Publishing. 1978. Available through the UVic Bookstore and through Vital Source ([vitalsource.com](https://vitalsource.com)). Free on Internet Archive ([archive.org](https://archive.org)).

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 Kobo ([kobo.com](https://kobo.com)) and Amazon. Free online through UVic Library. (Earlier editions are fine.)

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

## Brightspace

To access the course materials on Brightspace go to [bright.uvic.ca](https://bright.uvic.ca) and log in with your 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 links to many of the course readings, details about how much of particular texts you need to read, a calendar of course events, a class list with email links, your grades and various supplementary materials. It is also where you will find the writing assignments and quizzes.

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## Course Work

### First Term

Three Quizzes 5% each

Five Writing Assignments

### Second Term

Three Quizzes 5% each

Five Writing Assignments

Your lowest writing assignment grade for the year will automatically be dropped.  
The nine remaining writing assignments will count for 70% of the course grade.

## 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 one or two in-class workshops to prepare you to tackle the assignment.

**Note:** *For full credit on the writing assignments participating in the workshop is required.* The assignment is not just about the final product but about engaging in the process as well. Assignments submitted with no workshop participation will lose 10% of their grade.

These writing assignments are very short papers (ranging from 250 to 700 words). Specific instructions for each assignment will be posted on the course Brightspace page. It is important to read and follow those instructions. *Each assignment will have specific criteria which must be met in order to receive credit.*

	Topic	Philosophical Work
WA 1 9/12	The Good Life: Does Epicurus have the cure for what ails you?	Apply a theory to a particular case and evaluate its success
WA 2 10/1	Personal Identity: I am not this body.	Identify an argument; check for validity and soundness
WA 3 10/28	Ethics: Of course it would be wrong, but why?	Apply two theories to a case and compare their success
WA 4 11/25	Perception: But I'm looking right at it.	Use an example to support an argument
WA 5 12/3	Knowledge and Reality: Does anyone know if there's a tree in the quad?	Do a comparative evaluation of theories
WA 6 TBA	Philosophy of Religion: Can you believe it?	Explain the debate between two philosophers with divergent criteria
WA 7 2/4	Scientific Method: Is it <i>all</i> pseudoscience?	Consider further implications of a theory
WA 8 2/12	Free Will and Control: Get control of yourself!	Develop an argument by analogy; consider an objection
WA 9 3/12	Minds and Machines: What do I have to do to convince you?	Evaluate the success of an objection
WA 10 4/4	Existential Crisis: Face the Question	Do a comparative evaluation of practical advice

## Help with Writing Assignments

The best way to get help with your assignments is to participate in the workshops. For more help you can come to my regular office hours. In addition, the TAs will have an office hour for each writing assignment to help you make sure that you are on the right track. Times and places for those office hours will be posted on the Brightspace calendar.

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## Submitting Writing Assignments

Your writing assignments must be submitted on-line through Brightspace.

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.

## A.I.

Using AI to draft or write your assignments is prohibited. It's fine to use AI to find information, but that information must be checked by you. That means you must find a reliable source to cite. If you cannot confirm information gleaned from an AI source, do not use it. 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.

## Quizzes

These will be be timed multiple choice, short answer and fill in the blank quizzes that you will take on Brightspace. The first two quizzes will be available on Brightspace during class time. Class will not meet on those days. Quiz 3 will be open for a week to give you flexibility at the end of the term. If you miss a quiz due to illness or exceptional circumstance contact me immediately to schedule a make-up quiz.

## 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/students/academics/academic-integrity/>. 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

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

“**EP**” stands for **Experiencing Philosophy** by Falikowski and Mills

Readings with no source indicated can be found through the Brightspace page.

### First Term

#### Introduction

W 9/3	S&D Chapter 1: <i>What is philosophy?</i>
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#### The Good Life

F 9/5	EP 3.4 <i>Hedonism: Pleasure is the Measure</i>
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T 9/9	<u>WORKSHOP</u> for Writing Assignment One
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W 9/10	<u>WORKSHOP</u> continued EP 3.1 <i>Stoicism: A Prescription for Peace of Mind</i>
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F 9/12	Writing Assignment One Due 8pm EP 3.5 <i>Buddhism as a Philosophy of Life</i>
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#### Logic

T 9/16	S&D Chapter 2: <i>What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?</i> <i>Introduction—2.3</i>
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W 9/17	EP 2.2 <i>Deductive Arguments</i>
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F 9/19	S&D Chapter 2: <i>What are arguments and how should we evaluate them?</i> <i>2.5—2.7</i>
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#### Searching for the Self

T 9/23	Perry <i>A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, The First Night</i> S&D Chapter 12: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive death?</i> 12.1—12.3
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W 9/24	<u>WORKSHOP</u> for Writing Assignment Two
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F 9/26	<u>WORKSHOP</u> continued
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T 9/30	Day of Truth and Reconciliation—Classes do not meet
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W 10/1	Writing Assignment Two Due 8pm Perry <i>A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality, The Second Night</i> S&D Chapter 12: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive death?</i> 12.4
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## Searching for the Self *continued*

F 10/3	Perry <b>A Dialogue On Personal Identity And Immortality</b> , <i>The Third Night</i> S&D Chapter 11: <i>Will you be the same person in ten years? Could you survive death?</i> 12.5 Velleman <i>So It Goes</i> <i>recommended</i>
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## Ethics

T 10/7	EP 5.4 <i>Immanuel Kant's Deontological Ethics</i> , pp. 365-374 Kant <b>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</b> , Section One, <i>recommended</i>
W 10/8	Quiz 1 Logic and Personal Identity open 9:30 to 11:30 am
F 10/10	Kant <i>continued</i>
T 10/14	S&D Chapter 15: <i>What should we do?</i> (Part I) 15.1—15.3 Mill <b>Utilitarianism</b> , Chapter Two, <i>recommended</i>
W 10/15	<i>continued</i>
F 10/17	S&D Chapter 15: <i>What should we do?</i> (Part I) 15.6 The Trolley Problem (video)
T 10/21	S&D Chapter 16: <i>What should we do?</i> (Part II)
W 10/22	<u>WORKSHOP</u> for Writing Assignment Three
F 10/24	S&D Chapter 16: <i>What should we do?</i> (Part II) <i>continued</i>
T 10/28	Writing Assignment Three Due 8pm <u>WORKSHOP</u> <i>continued</i>
W 10/29	Quiz 2 Ethics and the Good Life open 9:30 to 11:30 am

## Knowledge and Reality

F 10/31	Plato <b>Meno</b>
T 11/4	<i>continued</i>
W 11/5	Plato <b>Phaedo</b> EP 4.2 <i>Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology</i>
F 11/7	Descartes <b>Meditations on First Philosophy</b> , Meditation One S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> Introduction—5.1

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Reading Break 11/10 – 11/12 No Classes

## Knowledge and Reality *continued*

F 11/14	Descartes <b>Meditations on First Philosophy</b> , Meditation Two S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> 5.2–5.3
T 11/18	S&D Chapter 5: <i>Can we be completely certain about anything?</i> 5.4– <i>Conclusion</i>
W 11/19	Russell <i>Appearance and Reality, The Existence of Matter</i>
F 11/21	<u>WORKSHOP</u> for Writing Assignment Four
T 11/25	<b>Writing Assignment Four Due 8pm</b> S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> 6.1–6.3 EP 4.4 <i>Locke's empiricist Theory of Ideas</i> Locke <b>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</b> , Book II, Chapter viii, <i>recommended</i>
W 11/26	Berkeley <b>Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous</b> , First Dialogue S&D Chapter 6: <i>Can we trust our senses?</i> 6.4–6.5
F 11/28	<i>continued</i>
T 12/2	<u>WORKSHOP</u> for Writing Assignment Five
W 12/3	<b>Writing Assignment Five Due 8pm</b> <u>WORKSHOP</u> continued
W 12/11	Quiz 3 Knowledge and Reality opens at 8am on 12/4 closes at 8pm on 12/11

## Second Term Topics

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

## Territory Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria acknowledges and respects the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and X̱sepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## Equity

The University of Victoria 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/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN> If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.

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## Religious Accommodation

The University recognizes its obligation to make reasonable accommodation for students whose observance of holy days might conflict with the academic requirements of a course or program. Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the [UVIC Calendar](#).

## Academic Accommodation

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you believe you will require academic accommodations to address barriers to your education in this course and you have not already registered with the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#), please do so. The Centre for Accessible Learning is the office designated to make arrangements for accommodations. You can find information about academic accommodations through their website.

## 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/UnIn/UARe/PoAcl.html>). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

## Student Conduct

This course is governed by UVic's policies on student behaviour and adheres to its commitment to [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#). All members of our class—myself, our T.A.s, and all students—have the right to experience and the responsibility to help create such an environment. Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Tri-Faculty; these [standards for professional behaviour](#) apply to interactions both in person and online. Please see also information on University expectations regarding [Student Conduct](#) and policies regarding [Non-academic Student Misconduct](#).

## Resources for Navigating the University

[UVic Learn Anywhere](#) UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students. It offers learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.

[Library resources](#)

Indigenous [student services](#)

[Centre for Academic Communication](#)

[Learning Strategies Program](#)

[Academic Concession Regulations](#)

[Academic Concessions and Accommodations](#)

[Student wellness](#)

[Ombudsperson](#) A resource to help resolve disputes or complaints.

Other [student groups and resources](#).

## University Statements and Policies

University Calendar – [“Information for all students”](#)

Academic accommodation & access for students with disabilities – [Policy AC1205](#)

[Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)

[Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)

[Student Conduct and Non-Academic Student Misconduct](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)

[Equity and Human Rights](#)

[Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)

Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)