

Introduction to Philosophy: Values and Society

PHIL 101, Section S2/T2, Winter 2014 | University of Alberta
Wednesdays 6:00 – 9:00 PM, Tory 1-96

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Office Hours: M W, 10:00 AM – Noon (*or by appointment*)

Course Description

In this course, as its name indicates, you will be introduced to philosophy through some puzzling questions regarding values and society, or if you prefer, questions regarding living morally with others. The course will be divided into four main sections:

- 1) Philosophy and The Good Life
- 2) Moral Theories
- 3) Human Nature and the State
- 4) Marx, Capitalism and Oppression.

Reading texts from some major philosophers such as Plato, Epicurus, Hobbes, Rousseau, Mill, Kant, and Marx, we will think about some of the following questions: What makes a life worth living? What is the value of the philosophical life? Is happiness or pleasure more valuable than knowledge? How can we know what the right thing to do is? Is it more important to minimize the suffering or to respect the rights of others? Toward whom do we have moral responsibilities? Are humans naturally good or evil? Are humans better off with or without a ruler? Are inequalities among members of society inevitable? What is the relation between capitalism and patriarchy? between the oppression of the workers in capitalism and form of oppressions (sexism, racism, etc.)? Those questions have been puzzling philosophers for many centuries and still continue to do so, so you should not expect to get any clear-cut answers but to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of those questions. Through the readings, you will be presented with different and sometimes opposite views. Since philosophy is not about opinions but about providing arguments to support one's views, we will spend most of this course assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments provided in the readings. You will also be asked to provide some input into the discussion, but as any philosopher, you will need to back up your claims with arguments. A central aim of this course is to make you think more deeply about complex philosophical issues, provide arguments for your positions, critically assess other people's arguments and communicate your ideas clearly orally and in writing. My hope and expectation is that you will discover some unexpected insights and new ways of thinking about the world and your place in it.

Required Textbook

Cahn, Steven M. *Classics of Political & Moral Philosophy*. Second Edition. Oxford, 2011

Assignments & Grades

Reading Questions (10%)
Attendance and Participation (10%)
2 Short Papers (20% each)
Final Exam (40%)

1. Reading Questions (10%)

Reading Questions (RQs) will be posted on eClass every Thursday. RQs are due the next class session (i.e., the following Wednesday). Give them to the instructor before the lecture starts! They can be hand-written or typed and should NOT be more than one page long. Answer the RQs in your own words; do not simply quote some passage of the text but include in parentheses the number(s) of the page(s) where you found the answer. *There is ABSOLUTELY NO POSSIBILITY of extension or make-ups for RQs!*

Each RQ is worth 1 point for up to a total of maximum 10 points. RQs are graded in the following way:

- 1 = answers show basic understanding of the reading material;
- 0.5 = answers show that the student has read the material (or parts of the material) but there is significant lack of understanding;
- 0 = no answers or answers do not show that the student has read the material.

Your RQs will be very important later on in the course as they will be a good aid for exam review. Keep them for this reason as well as and just in case I make a mistake calculating your final RQ-grade. The first RQ is due January 22 (Week 3).

2. Attendance and Participation (10%)

Your presence and participation are essential components of this course, and as such, they are required. I will keep track of attendance and participation. It is your responsibility to come prepared to participate. Participation means: being awake and engaged in the activity (as opposed to, e.g., sending text messages to your friends or sleeping on your desk). It does not mean you have to speak all the time or even speak up in front of the entire class but you have to be engaged in the discussion. It is up to me to gauge not merely the quantity of times in which you speak up, but the quality of what you have to say. My assessment of this at the end of the term will take these things into account.

3. Short Essays (20% each, total 40%)

In this course you will have to write two short essays (3-5 pages or 800-1250 words). Detailed handouts on how to write a philosophy essay, how to do an outline and how to quote and reference the material is located on eClass under 'Essay Writing Aids and Instructions' and will be discussed before you write the first paper.

First Essay Topics assigned: **January 29** First Essay due: **February 12**

Second Essay Topics assigned: **March 5** Second Essay due: **March 19**

4. Final Exam (40%)

The final exam for this course is scheduled for our last class session (April 9 at 6:00 pm). During the previous class, we will have a final exam review session. On that occasion, I will also give you information about the format of the questions on the exam.

Lateness & Extension Policy

No extension will be granted for reading questions.

Extensions for papers can only be granted for serious reasons and if you contact me before the due time (that is: not at the beginning of the class on which the paper is due!). Start working on your paper early. “The assignment is too hard,” “I didn’t know what to do” or “I’m very busy this week” are not serious reasons to be granted an extension, but they are good reasons to ask for help. Come to my office hours or make an appointment.

Late papers will be penalized one letter-grade (4%) per day. Papers will not be accepted more than 5 days after the deadline unless an extension has been granted.

A deferred examination is possible for serious reasons following university regulation. You must apply for a deferred examination at your Faculty Office. For the procedure in case of missed final examination, consult your Calendar § 23.5.6

eClass

To access eClass, click on the link on the University webpage and type in your username and password. You will have access to the main course page. On eClass you can (among other things):

- Get a copy of any handout (including this syllabus and the reading schedule)
- Get the reading questions
- Get the powerpoint slides from the lecture (after each week’s lectures)
- Consult the course calendar for deadlines
- Check for announcements made in class
- Post and respond to comments and questions on the course or on the readings

Requirements

To do well in this course you have to:

- Attend class (If you have to miss class, get notes from someone, get handouts from eClass, etc.)
- Do the required reading before and after class (remember: a 3-credit-hour course means 6 hours of work outside the classroom). The RQs are there to help you get a sense of the

reading before class; the lectures are there to help you get a deeper understanding of the reading afterwards, our discussions are there to make you discuss ideas.

- Engage with the reading material, with the lectures, with the discussions. Think about it, talk about it (with me, with your peers, your friends, on eClass). Don't just accept what you read or what I say. Ask yourself: is this true? what reasons do I have to accept it? In class, if you don't understand something, or if a word is being used that you don't understand, raise your hand and ask. Chances are there are others in the room who are lost too.

- Don't be afraid to tell me about any difficulties you are having with the course, the material, the assignments, and do so as early as possible. Remember: I am there to help you succeed, but I can only do this if I know that you need help.

Student Services

The University of Alberta offers a vast array of services to its students. In particular, the Academic Support Centre can help you with essay writing, efficient reading and note-taking strategies, time management, etc. If you are struggling with your essay, this is one place to turn to get help. The Centre is located in room 2-703 of the Student Union Building. See <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicsupport/> for more information. The Centre for Writers in the basement of Assiniboia Hall also offers free help with essays. See <http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/> for more information.

Academic Integrity

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standard of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/StudentAppeals.aspx>) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University. In particular, note that "No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study" (Code of Student Behaviour, §30.3.2(1)). This applies to all information you find on the internet, whether it is signed by its author or anonymous. Also note that submitting the same work for two courses is considered self-plagiarism. Additional Sources are found on the Truth in Education webpage at <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>. The goal of this class is to learn to think. By plagiarizing, you not only commit a serious academic offence, but you also prove to us that you do not satisfy the most basic requirement for this class. We take academic integrity very seriously. If we suspect you of cheating or plagiarizing, we will follow the procedure outline in the Code. We will discuss plagiarism again before you write the first paper.

Grading Profile

A+ ≥ 92-100	A ≥ 88-92	A- ≥ 84-88
B+ ≥ 80-84	B ≥ 76-80	B- ≥ 72-76
C+ ≥ 68-72	C ≥ 64-68	C- ≥ 60-64
D+ ≥ 55-60	D ≥ 50-55	F < 50

Note: this class is not graded on a curve.

Normal average is B- but there can be discrepancies from assignment to assignment or section to section. All papers are attributed a LETTER GRADE, which is then converted into a number in order to facilitate the calculation of your final grade.

A-range indicates **EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE**: comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course, fluency in communicating that knowledge and independence in applying material and principles. It is clear that the student has gone beyond a basic understanding of the texts (likely they have noticed a subtlety of the argument) and do not commit any major errors in reasoning or applying the concepts. The difference between A+, A, and A- will likely have to do with the clarity of the presentation of the argument, originality, and strength of the defense.

B-range indicates **GOOD PERFORMANCE**: thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively. The paper demonstrates an understanding of the text, but not an exceptional understanding. Papers like these will straightforwardly regurgitate ideas from class or the readings without major error. The difference between A-range papers and these is that the understanding is fairly basic, containing little or no evidence of further thought beyond what was presented in class. There are no significant mistakes in reasoning.

C-range indicates **SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE**: basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently. These papers make use of the ideas surrounding the texts, but they are lacking in some important way. Typically these papers will not address the topic directly, go off on an unnecessary tangent, make blatantly fallacious arguments, or commit some misunderstandings about the required concepts.

D-range indicates **MINIMALLY COMPETENT PERFORMANCE**: adequate understanding of most principles and materials treated in the course, but with significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding. These essays are attempts to do what was asked that fail in one or more significant ways. They are often short, having sentences and ideas that do not connect cleanly to each other throughout the entire paper. It is unclear what the topic of discussion is. Perhaps it is an incoherent “word-salad.” A paper that is completely filled with quotes and showing no original thought on the part of the student (a copy&paste paper) would likely go here.

F indicates **FAILURE**: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course or a failure to complete the work required in the course. Ideas presented are just plain wrong. Counter arguments are absent or clearly committing the straw-person fallacy (this will be explained in your second tutorial). Unsubstantiated claims exist throughout. Serious jumps in logic or reasoning exist. Policy about course outlines can be found in § 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

Course Schedule

Class	Unit	Topic	Required Reading
Week 1: January 8		<i>Introduction</i>	
		- Welcome - What is philosophy?	None
Week 2: January 15	<i>Unit 1: Philosophy and the Good Life</i>	The Philosopher and the Sophist, the value of the examined life.	Plato's <i>Defence of Socrates</i> (pp. 5-21) & Voltaire's <i>A Good Brahman</i> (eClass)
Week 3: January 22		- The Philosopher King - How to write a philosophy essay *** <i>First RQ due</i>	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , ch. V and ch. VII
Week 4: January 29		Pleasure and pain, freedom from disturbance as the goal of life. * <i>Essay 1 Topics Assigned</i>	Epicurus, <i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> and <i>Principal Doctrines</i> . (pp. 265-270)
Week 5: February 5	<i>Unit 2: Moral Theories</i>	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> ch. 2 (pp. 924-937)
Week 6: February 12	<i>(e.g., Doing What is Right)</i>	Kantian Ethics: The good will, inclination, and duty. *** <i>Essay 1 Due</i>	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> ch. 1 (pp. 768-774).
No Class February 19 in lieu of READING WEEK			
Week 7: February 26		Kantian Ethics Cont'd: The Categorical Imperative	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> ch. 2 (pp. 778-787).
Week 8: March 5	<i>Unit 3: Human Nature and the State</i>	The State of Nature and the Sovereign * <i>Essay 2 Topics Assigned</i>	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 13, 14, & 17
Week 9: March 12		The State of Nature and the origin of inequalities	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , The First Part (pp. 546-553) + supplemental readings on eclass. Start with eclass reading and follow directions.
Week 10: March 19		The Social Contract and the General Will	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> part

		*** <i>Essay 2 Due</i>	two (pp. 553-560) + <i>Social Contract</i> Book I #VI-VII (pp. 563-565) and Book II sec. III (pp. 568-570).
Week 11: March 26	<i>Unit 4: Marx, Capitalism and Oppression</i>	Alienated Labour	Karl Marx, <i>Estranged Labour</i> (pp. 862-869; 875-878)
Week 12: April 2		Bourgeois, Proletarian, Communist: Class Struggle and Revolution	Marx & Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (pp. 878-895)
Week 13: April 9		FINAL EXAM	