

University of Central Oklahoma
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities & Philosophy
Summer 2020

PHIL 1113: Introduction to Philosophy
CRN: 31099

Instructor: Dr. Jerry Green

Email: jgreen67@uco.edu

Phone: 405.974.5612

Office: Liberal Arts 204A

Office Hours: M-Th 2:00 - 3:00 PM

Course Description:

"This course is a general introduction to the major areas of philosophical study. Students will be provided with the opportunity to begin their own critical analysis of their philosophical beliefs."

What does this mean? In this course we will focus on (i) our ability to think, and the various factors that impede or distort that ability, (ii) what steps we can take to avoid these impediments and distortions, and so cultivate our ability to think better, and (iii) some of the values which support and direct good thinking. Hence the main goal of this course is practical: how can we transform ourselves into clearer, more careful, and more cogent thinkers and actors?

The content of this course will include:

- The nature and value of truth, and its relationship to judgement, belief, and opinion
- The composition of the human mind, and the complex relationships between its parts
- The standards and habits which distinguish good reasoning and use of evidence from bad
- The nature, source, and variety of epistemic values, and the case for epistemic responsibility
- The structure of epistemic virtues, and how to cultivate them

Finally, we will focus on developing the following more practical philosophical skills:

- Reading and understanding conceptually difficult texts
- Critically evaluating arguments and assumptions (yours and others')
- Communicating complex ideas clearly and efficiently

In other words, this course will be like a boot camp for learning to think and communicate clearly.

Core Curriculum Course:

This course is a Critical Inquiry Core Course and fulfills one of the core curriculum requirements of the university. It emphasizes ethical and critical thinking skills necessary for interpreting the self in relation to culture and society. This course will introduce students to philosophic inquiry into many of the seminal ideas in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that have shaped our world. This course stresses the teaching of philosophic inquiry as a significant way of knowing. The course addresses many of the major topics in the history of philosophy and includes the study of both inductive and deductive reasoning as well as logical fallacies.

Prerequisites: None

Course Objectives: In this course students will read classical and contemporary writings on such matters as ethics and the quest for the good life, truth and the problem of knowledge, the concept of self, the idea of freedom and the concept of human nature. Students will seek to answer, using critical reasoning, a series of questions about these issues as raised by the course readings. In addition, students will engage each other in sustained discussion of these issues. The following are the outcomes a successful student will attain by the end of this course: (1) identify and define key philosophical terms studied in the course, (2) distinguish among the philosophic views studied in the course, (3) identify major points and arguments of various philosophic essays, (4) critically analyze and evaluate philosophic arguments, and (5) provide rationally persuasive arguments in defense of their own beliefs about a variety of controversial issues in philosophy.

Student Learning Objectives:

- 1) Students will begin the process of developing ethical and critical thinking skills necessary for interpreting the self in relation to culture and society.
- 2) Students will read, analyze, and synthesize major texts from the history of philosophy and communicate about them in writing.
- 3) Students will analyze, appraise, and formally symbolize arguments.

Transformational Learning Outcomes: The University of Central Oklahoma is a learning-centered organization committed to Transformative education through active engagement in the teaching-learning interchange, scholarly and creative pursuits, leadership, global competency, healthy lifestyles, and service to others. Transformative learning goals (the “Central Six”) have been identified as: *Discipline Knowledge*, *Leadership*, *Research*, *Scholarly and Creative Activities*, *Service Learning and Civic Engagement*, *Global and Cultural Competencies*, and *Health and Wellness*.

This course addresses four of the University’s transformative learning goals:

- *Discipline Knowledge*, by investigating some core questions and subfields of philosophy
- *Leadership*, by developing self-awareness, decision-making skills, and ethical fluency
- *Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities*, by applying course content to personal interests
- *Health and Wellness*, by focusing on mental health and practical/academic success

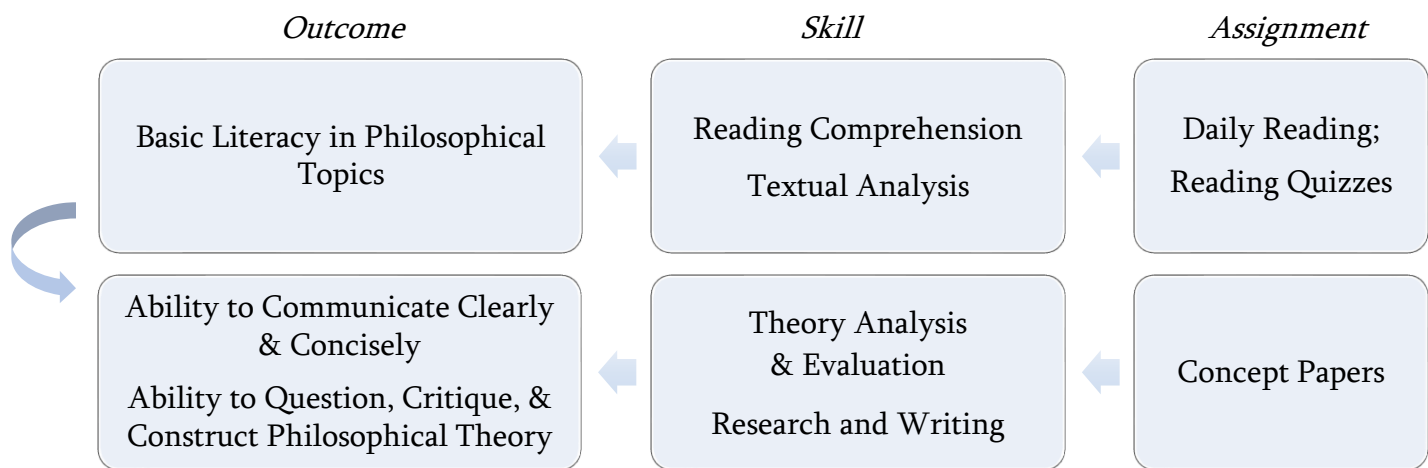
Course Materials

We will not use a textbook for this course, because books are expensive. Instead, I have carefully (and laboriously!) selected a range of relevant free- and fair-use materials, from academic journal articles and book chapters to blog posts and interviews.

All material will be posted as pdfs on D2L. with the relevant date in the file name. When possible, I will also include a link to the original source. I will also include occasional videos and podcasts that either summarize relevant material, or feature the author or topic in an interesting way.

A word of caution: reading philosophy is hard, even under the best circumstances. Normally I would require a hard copy coursepack, because it is nearly impossible to read carefully and deeply off a screen (the brain doesn’t process it the same). If you have the option, you should print the material so you can read in physically, take notes on it, etc.

In addition to this primary course material, I will also post a number of handouts and other material to D2L. Most important are the *Daily Reading Handouts*, one-page supplements to each day’s reading that give background context, highlight key points, and suggest study questions. Daily Reading Handouts are also **required texts**: material introduced there are fair game for quizzes and papers. My advice is to read the Daily Reading Handouts *first*, then the day’s material, then the Handouts again.



Reading

You'll have around 50 pages of reading per week in this course; the average is about 13 pages per meeting. This material can be very difficult, and you will usually have to read it more than once. I've done everything I can to keep the assignments short, accessible and wholly relevant, and I will tell you when you can occasionally skim, so you won't waste your time reading pages that don't matter. But that also means that anything included is important, so you have to read it carefully.

Daily Reading Quizzes

We will have low-stakes reading comprehension quizzes for each reading. These quizzes will use a variety of short-answer questions (multiple choice, True/False, etc), and will test whether you're keeping up with the reading and paying attention in class. These should be easy points that you earn simply by doing the minimal required work. Conversely, if you're doing poorly on these quizzes, this shows that you need to change your study habits. Come talk to me to discuss study strategies.

Engagement

This class will take place fully online, which deprives you of many benefits of a classroom environment. To mitigate this loss as best we can, there will be a variety of options for participating in class online, with me and your fellow students (Webex, chats, etc).

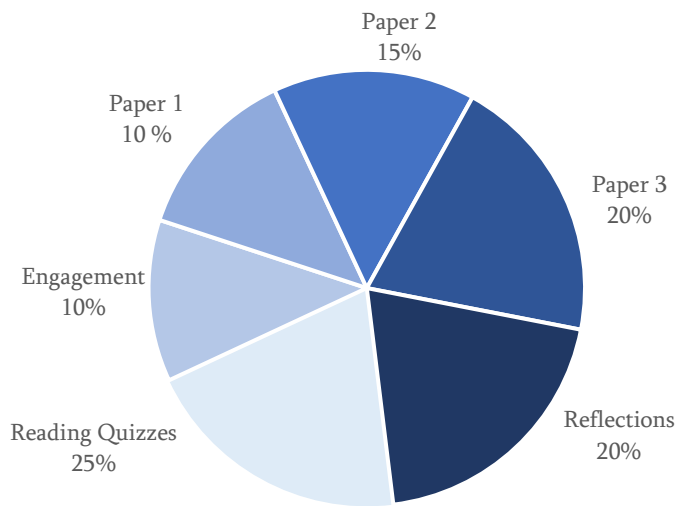
Concept Papers¹

You will have three traditional academic papers throughout the semester, ranging from 2-4 pp for the first to 8-10 pp for the fourth. You will be asked to explain and apply course material using the reading from class and outside sources. The last and longest of these is effectively a final paper, due on our scheduled Final Exam time (9-11 AM, Tuesday July 28th).

Reflection Papers

Finally, you will have a set of small (1-2 pp) reflection papers throughout the class. These papers ask you to reflect on your goals in taking this class, what you learned as it progresses, and how to apply the concepts and themes from the course to real-life issues outside the classroom.

¹ I will give you handouts with more specific instructions and advice on these papers as the semester progresses.



Grade Scale:

| | |
|------------|-----|
| 100.0-90.0 | = A |
| 89.9-80.0 | = B |
| 79.9-70.0 | = C |
| 69.9-60.0 | = D |
| 59.9 - 0.0 | = F |

Quizzes: There will be 32 total class sessions, and we will have a quiz for each of them. Each quiz will be worth 1 point total, which equals 1 % of your total grade. There is a 25 point cap in this category: once you hit 25, you stop. But there are actually 32 points available, if you got 100% on every quiz. This means that you can miss a few questions (either by getting answers wrong or by skipping it entirely), and still get the full points in this category. In other words, you will get more than 25 chances to earn 25 points, which is a like a curve but better, because it rewards people who keep trying even if they don't always get things right.

Engagement: This category is worth 10 pts (= 10% of your final grade). There will be a variety of ways to earn these 10 pts throughout the semester (participation in Webex sessions or office hours, use of discussion boards & chat functions, etc.).

Papers: Your Reflection papers will be worth 20 pts total (4 x 5 pts). Your Concept Papers will get weightier over time: 10 pts for the first, 15 for the second, 20 for the third.

Extra Credit: I do not typically offer extra credit assignments, though I will occasionally give extra quiz points for things like taking evaluation surveys. Don't bug me about this: focus instead on doing well on the work you already have.

R&R Policy: If you get less than an 80% on a Concept Paper that you submitted on time, you can revise and resubmit it to earn up to an 80%. To do this, you will have to both revise the paper to fix its shortcomings, and to write a cover letter detailing, for each point you lost on the paper, (i) what exactly you failed to do correctly, and why you did this, and (ii) what specifically you did to fix. (I will give you a handout about how to do this later).

Rounding: The letter grade cut-off for each grade is 90.0, 80.0, etc. I may round up in exceptional cases, if (i) I feel you've done better than your score suggests, and (ii) your grade is not due to excessive incomplete or missing assignments. This is a courtesy, not an entitlement.

Appeals: I am more than happy to talk to you about low grades, and regrade your assignment if merited (but note the risk that the second grade could be lower). However, I consider asking for a grade increase for non-performance reasons (e.g. to keep a scholarship or prevent your parents from being mad) to be academic misconduct, because you are asking for me to give you a grade you did not earn. So don't ask.

Schedule & Late Work

This class will be run asynchronously (i.e. there is no set meeting time). But there is still a schedule to keep. There are new Reading Assignments scheduled Monday-Thursday of each week, as if we were keep a normal summer schedule. Quizzes will be marked on your calendar on the day each Reading is scheduled. However, each quiz will be open for the entire week, so that you can work on your own schedule. Quizzes for each unit will close when we move on to the next unit, and will not be reopened, so if you put it off too long, you will miss your chance to take the quiz.

Papers will be submitted online, and instructions will be circulated well in advance, so there should be no need for make-ups, barring exceptional circumstances (e.g. a prolonged illness). If you find yourself in such circumstances, it is your responsibility to get in contact with me ASAP to work something out.

A 1-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline for Short Papers. A 2-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline for the Final Paper. Papers not submitted by noon on Thursday July 30th get an automatic '0'.

Excused Absences

The exception to the Late/Make-Up policy listed above is excused absences. The University considers absences for the following reasons excused:

- travel considered part of the instructional program of the university
- invited participation in activities directly and officially sponsored by the university
- jury duty or military obligations
- serious illness, medical condition, pregnant and parenting students' rights (as outlined in Title IX), accident, or injury
- death or serious illness in immediate family
- religious observances. *Note: a list of religious observances must be submitted to the instructor sometime in the first two weeks of the semester.*

Academic Honesty

Given that much of this course is devoted to intellectual and moral virtues, it should be no surprise that is also has high standards for academic conduct. You are expected to consult and understand the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy (<http://sites.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/aa-forms/StudentInfoSheet.pdf>); participation in this class constitutes an agreement to follow this policy.

My own policy is this: it is always better to ask for help than to cheat. Always. Cheating takes more work, with worse results, than simply attempting the assignment, even if you phone it in. If you are confused at any point about what constitutes academic dishonesty, just ask: I'm here to help. However, if you are caught engaging in academic misconduct, I will pursue whatever maximum penalties the University may apply, from a 0 to an assignment to an F for the course to expulsion from UCO.

Note that UCO subscribes to the Turnitin.com plagiarism prevention service. Students, by taking this course, agree that all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com restricted access reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such assignments. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com website. Turnitin.com is just one of the various plagiarism prevention tools and methods that may be utilized by your instructor during the semester. The UCO Student Handbook describes the process for contesting allegations of plagiarism.

Reasonable Accommodations Policy

Any student who needs extra time or resources to do their best work due to a physical, cognitive or emotional condition may qualify for academic accommodations. You should consult Disability Support Services for further information: <http://sites.uco.edu/student-affairs/dss/>

The University of Central Oklahoma complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students with disabilities who need special accommodations must make their requests by contacting Disability Support Services, at (405) 974-2516 (V/TTY). The DSS Office is located in the Nigh University Center, Room 305. Students should also notify the instructor of special accommodation needs as soon as possible.

Some advice: *do not let shyness or embarrassment or pride stop you from getting the services you deserve.* I've seen too many students allow their grades to suffer because they didn't claim the accommodations they were owed. I will do everything I can to make sure that your accommodations stay anonymous.

Title IX

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Physical and Mental Health

College can be a very stressful time, emotionally, socially, and academically. You don't have to face these stresses alone. There are numerous resources on campus to help, including:

<http://sites.uco.edu/student-affairs/scc/>

<http://sites.uco.edu/wellness/shc/>

Student Information Sheet

More important info here: <http://sites.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/aa-forms/StudentInfoSheet.pdf>

Schedule

- 6.01: Corvino (2015) "The Fact/Opinion Distinction"
DeNicola (2018) "You don't have a right to believe whatever you want to"
- 6.02: McQuire (2018) *Teaching Yourself How to Learn*, Ch. 3
- 6.03: Lombrozo (2016) "Scientist or Lawyer?"
Galef (2016) "Soldier or Scout"
- 6.04: Schoenfield (2020) "Why do you believe what you do?"
Lenz (2015) "Fact-Checking Grandma"
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- 6.08: Marcus (2008), *Kluge* Ch. 1
- 6.09: Kahneman (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow* Ch.1.1, 1.3, 1.5
- 6.10: Eurich (2013) *Insight*, Ch. 3
- 6.11: Gendler (2008) "Alief and Belief, §1"
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- 6.15: Dobelli, *The Art of Thinking Clearly*, excerpts;
- 6.16: McRaney, *You Are Not So Smart*, excerpts;
- 6.17: Fehlh Haber (2017) "What know-it-alls don't know..."
Weir (2013) "Feel like a Fraud?"
- 6.18: Warren (2018) "The Bias Blind Spot Just Replicated"; Santos (2019) "GI Joe Fallacy"
Robson (2019) "The Stupidity Trap"
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- 6.22: Koons & Pickavance (2017) *Atlas of Reality*, Ch. 2.1-22
- 6.23: Lynch (2004) *True to Life*, Ch. 1
- 6.24: Mitova (2018) "The duty of inquiry, or why Othello was a fool"
- 6.25: Dvorsky (2013) "How Bayes' Rule Can Make You a Better Thinker";
Lee & King (2017) "Bayes' Theorem"
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- 6.29: Nagel (2006) *Epistemology: A VSI*, Ch.6
- 6.30: Nguyen (2018) "Escape the Echo Chamber"
- 7.01: Nichols (2014) "The Death of Expertise" & (2017) "The Death of Expertise as a Decline of Trust"
- 7.02: Origgi (2012) "Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Trust"
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- 7.06: Annas (2011) *Intelligent Virtue*, Ch. 2
- 7.07: Zagzebski (2018) "Intellectual Virtues: Admirable States of Character"
- 7.08: Baehr (2018) "The Four Dimensions of Intellectual Virtue"
- 7.09: Yu (2010) "The Mean, the Right, and Archery"
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- 7.13: Baril (2016) "The Role of Epistemic Virtue in the Realization of Basic Goods"
- 7.14: Watson (2018) "Curiosity and Inquisitiveness"
- 7.15: Hack (2015) "Credulity and Circumspection"
- 7.16: Cassam (2018) "Epistemic Insouciance"
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- 7.20: McGonigal (2010) *The Willpower Instinct*, Ch. 3
- 7.21: Thaler & Sunstein (2009) *Nudge*, Chs. 5 & 16
- 7.22: Miller, Christian (2018) *The Character Gap*, Ch. 9
- 7.23: Chang (2016) "How to Make Hard Choices"
-
- 7.28: Final assignments due