

**PHL 301f: Introduction to Philosophy**  
**Summer I, 2014**  
**M-F, 10:00-11:30 AM**  
**CLA 0.122**

**Instructor: Jerry Green**  
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**Office: WAG 229**  
**Hours: Th. 2-4 & by apt**

## **Course Description**

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Alfred North Whitehead famously wrote that “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato” (*Process and Reality*, Pt. II, Ch.1, §1). In this course we will take this claim seriously, and use Plato as an introduction to the main areas and approaches of contemporary philosophy. The main questions we will ask, and attempt to answer, are:

- What is knowledge, and why is it important? How can we tell when we have it?
- What, if anything, necessarily exists? What only contingently exists? How are these things related?
- Why should we behave morally? What does ‘morality’ even mean?
- What makes a political system just? How should citizen and state be related?

In addition to looking closely at what Plato himself had to say about these questions, we will also look at recent work on the same topics.

The main focus of this course, however, is not to learn what a famous philosopher said, but to learn how to do what philosophers do. In particular, we will focus on practicing the following philosophical skills:

- Reading and understanding conceptually difficult texts
- Critically evaluating arguments and assumptions
- Communicating complex ideas clearly and efficiently

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

## **What to Expect in this Course**

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I’m going to do my best to minimize lecturing; it can be boring, and inefficient. We’ll have about 20 minutes of lecture most days; the majority of our time will be spend either in full-class discussion or small-group discussion. We will also have daily reading quizzes (details below).

You’ll be expected to do a fair amount of talking in this class, both in small groups and to the whole class. Consequently, you’ll also be expected to contribute to a respectful class environment. This includes:

- Showing up regularly and on time
- Actively participating in discussion
- Exercising the virtues of patience, humility, bravery, diligence, and authenticity in class.
- Staying caught-up on assignments
- Allowing others to actively participate too

One thing you will learn very quickly in this class is that philosophy is hard. Many of the issues we take to be obvious are actually much more complicated. The first task of a philosopher is to realize how complicated things are; only then can we try to start figuring it out again. This means that you’ll spend a fair amount of time in this class being uncertain or puzzled. This is normal; embrace it. Perplexity doesn’t mean that you’re unintelligent, it means you’re thinking clearly and carefully about a difficult topic. And by the end of the course you’ll have worked through much of this puzzlement, and come to have a better grasp and better justification for many of your beliefs. That’s pretty rad.

## List of Readings

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### Required Texts

Plato, *Five Dialogues*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, Ed. John Cooper. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2002)

Plato, *Republic*. Trans G.M.A. Grube, Ed. C.D.C. Reeve. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1992)

### Accessible on Canvas

Short excerpts from Plato's *Cratylus*, *Ion*, *Hippias Minor*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*, *Symposium* and *Theaetetus*.

Articles by Amy Gutmann, Christine Korsgaard, Penelope Maddy, and Linda Zagzebski.

### Other Resources

I recommend that you have a look at the site '[Guide for the Perplexed](#)', from UT professor Dan Bonevac. The site has a lot of useful information about reading and writing philosophy. I would also recommend a [Guide for Reading Philosophy](#), and a [Guide for Writing Philosophy](#), both from Jim Pryor from NYU. Another useful resource is the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), which gives detailed overviews of many important figures and topics in philosophy. I didn't discover these sites until grad school, and I really wish I had known about them earlier.

## Assignments

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### Reading/Attendance

You'll have about 50 pages of reading per week in his course, usually around 7-15 pages per day. I've done my best to keep the reading short, and I'll let you know where to focus for each assignment. The material we read is fairly difficult, however, and will require multiple read-throughs. In lecture we'll spend some time reading through hard passages together and talking about them with one another.

### Daily Reading Quizzes

We will have in-class quizzes every day except for when we have exams. These quizzes will use a variety of short-answer questions, e.g. multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc. The quizzes will mainly test whether you're keeping up with the reading and paying attention in class. These should be easy points that you earn simply by keeping up in class (conversely, if you're doing poorly on these quizzes, it suggests that you're not putting in the requisite work).

### Weekly Exams

Each exam will have a few short answer questions of the same format as the reading quizzes, plus one or two one-paragraph essay-ish questions. The exams will test both reading/lecture comprehension and your exercise of philosophical skills.

### Final Paper<sup>1</sup>

In your final paper you'll write a short essay (c. 3-5 pages) about a single topic from the course. You'll be asked to (i) give a concise, accurate summary of the view in question (ii) explain a problem that this view might have, and (iii) suggest a way to improve the view to avoid this problem. Your paper will be evaluated in terms of how well it (i) communicates clearly and effectively, (ii) gives an accurate assessment of your topic, (iii) raises and responds persuasively to a viable objection. We will break the paper into smaller parts which will be due throughout the term.

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<sup>1</sup> I'll give you more details on the paper in a separate handout.

## Grades

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### Quizzes: 20%

80 questions, 0.25 points per question. You will have the chance to answer 95 questions over the course of the term, but only the top 80 will count. So missing a class, having a bad day, extra shift at work, etc., will not necessarily harm your grade.

### Exams: 40%

4 exams, 10 points each.

### Final Paper: 40%

- Thesis Statement: 0.25 points (part of reading quiz)
- Abstract: 5 pts
- Outline: 5 pts
- Rough Draft: 10 pts
- Final Draft: 20 pts

Extra Credit: Technically, none. But anyone who gets below an 8/10 on any exam, or less than full credit on the Thesis Statement or Outline, can redo the assignment to raise the grade to 8/10 for the exam or 5/5 on the Thesis Statement or Outline.

The grading scale for this class will be as follows:

100-94 = A	79.9-77 = C+	63.9-60 = D-
93.9-90 = A-	76.9-74 = C	59.9 - 0 = F
89.9-87 = B+	73.9-70 = C-	
86.9-84 = B	69.9-67 = D+	
83.9-80 = B-	66.9-64 = D	

## Honor Code & Academic Integrity

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The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are *learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility*. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

It is expected that any work you do in this course is the result of your academic efforts. University policies on academic dishonesty can be found [here](#). You are expected to be familiar with these policies; ignorance is not an excuse. In particular, you are required to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

Serious failures to maintain academic integrity in this course will result in the maximum possible penalty. At the very least, you will receive no credit for the assignment and be referred to Student Judicial Services for further review. Depending on the severity on the infraction, you could receive an F for the course, or be suspended or expelled from UT. Don't risk it.

In fact, my experience is that the effort people put into cheating without getting caught far exceeds the effort necessary to complete the assignment well in the first place. Just do your best work, and you'll be fine. You can find tips for avoiding academic dishonest [here](#).

TL;dr: *Don't Cheat!* Ask for help instead.

## **Late Work & Make-ups**

Most of your assignments will be in-class. Because there's a built-in curve for quiz grades, you may not make-up a missed quiz. If you know you will miss an exam, you **must** notify me a week in advance to schedule an alternative.

For the components of your final paper, they must be turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned date. If you miss this deadline, you have 12 hours to turn it in for ½ credit, and you lose your right to redo that component of the paper for a higher grade. If you know you'll miss class on the day a writing assignment is due, email it to me instead.

I know your work can sometimes be disrupted by forces beyond your control. If there's something that might hinder your attendance or completing your work on time, let me know ASAP. The more responsibility you show, the more flexible I can be (but don't push it!)

## **Undergraduate Writing Center**

The [Undergraduate Writing Center](#), located in the FAC 211, phone 471-6222, offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

The UWC is a great service you should all take advantage of. It is not a "remedial" service: their services are available to all, and useful to all. I encourage all of you to make an appointment to get feedback on your paper.

## **Services for Students With Disabilities**

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, see [here](#), or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

If you need to make special accommodations in this course, let me know **immediately**. And do not let shyness or embarrassment stop you from getting the services you deserve: I've seen too many students allow their grades to suffer because they didn't speak up when they should have.

## **Religious Holidays**

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss a work assignment or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. If you have a religious holiday during the first summer session, let me know **immediately**.

## **Tech Policy**

Computers, tablets, e-readers, etc., will not be allowed during class time. I know it sounds lame, but computers in class do [much more harm than good](#).

Three main reasons for this:

- 1) You think you can multi-task well. [You are incorrect](#). Even if you are miraculously among the 2% of people who can multi-task well, the people sitting around you are not, and you will distract them.
- 2) Electronic texts are much [less effective](#) than paper for the kind of reading we'll be doing.
- 3) [It is well-documented that taking](#) notes by hand is much more effective than typing. If you want a digital version of your notes, scan them or type them out after class.

So, unless you have an accommodation from SSD, you may not use computers, tablets, or phones in class.

## PHL 301f - Schedule

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	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment<sup>2</sup></u>
<i>Week 1: Intro</i>	6.5: Introductions 6.6: Logic	- Syllabus - Philosophy & Logic handout [C]
<i>Week 2: Epistemology</i>	6.9: What is knowledge? 6.10: Who has/lacks knowledge? 6.11: Justified True Belief 6.12: Recent Work in Epistemology 6.13: Exam 1	- <i>Apology</i> 21a-24a [5d] - <i>Protagoras</i> excerpts [C] - <i>Ion</i> excerpts [C] - <i>Republic</i> 331c-336c - <i>Meno</i> 80a-86c, 97a-98c [5D] - Zagzebski (2003) [C]
<i>Week 3: Metaphysics</i>	6.16: What is most real? 6.17: What makes real things real? 6.18: Platonic Forms  6.19: Recent Work in Metaphysics 6.20: Exam 2	- <i>Cratylus</i> excerpts [C] - <i>Phaedo</i> 72e-77a, 100b-110b [5D] - <i>Rep.</i> 506e-518d, 595a-598d - <i>Symposium</i> excerpts [C] - Maddy (1990), pp. 1-5, 20-21, 28-35 [C]
<i>Week 4: Ethics</i>	6.23: Why be moral? 6.24: Virtue 6.25: Vice 6.26: Recent Work in Ethics 6.27: Exam 3	- <i>Rep.</i> 357a-367e - <i>Rep.</i> 434d-445e - <i>Rep.</i> 571a-583a - Korsgaard (2009) [C]
<i>Week 5: Political Philosophy</i>	6.30: What is justice? 7.1: Kallipolis 7.2: Recent Work in Political Phil. 7.3: Exam 4 7.4: <i>Independence Day – No Class</i>	- <i>Crito</i> 43a-54e [5D] - <i>Rep.</i> 368c-376c, 412b-424a, 427e-434c - Gutman (2003) [C]
<i>Week 6: Review</i>	7.7: Advanced Epistemology 7.8: Advanced Metaphysics 7.9: Advanced Ethics/Political Phil. 7.10: Writing Workshop 7.11: <i>Writing Day – No Class</i> <sup>3</sup>  7.14: Final Papers due, 12:01 AM 7.16: Final Grades submitted, 10:00 AM	- <i>Theaetetus</i> excerpts [C] - <i>Parmenides</i> excerpts [C] - <i>Hippias Minor</i> excerpts [C] - N/A

Important Dates: 6.6: Last registration day; 6.10: Last refundable add/drop day; 6.25: Pass/fail deadline

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<sup>2</sup> [5D] = Five Dialogues, [C] = pdf on Canvas

<sup>3</sup> Our final exam is scheduled for 7:00-10:00 PM on 7.11. We will not meet at this time. You have the weekend to finish your final paper.