

University of Central Oklahoma
College of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities & Philosophy
Fall 2021

PHIL 1113: Introduction to Philosophy

CRN: 16781

MWF: 11:00 AM-11:50 AM

LAN 226

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Office: Liberal Arts 204C

Office Hours: T 10:00AM-12:00PM, W 9:00AM-10:00AM, Th 10:00AM-12:00PM

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

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

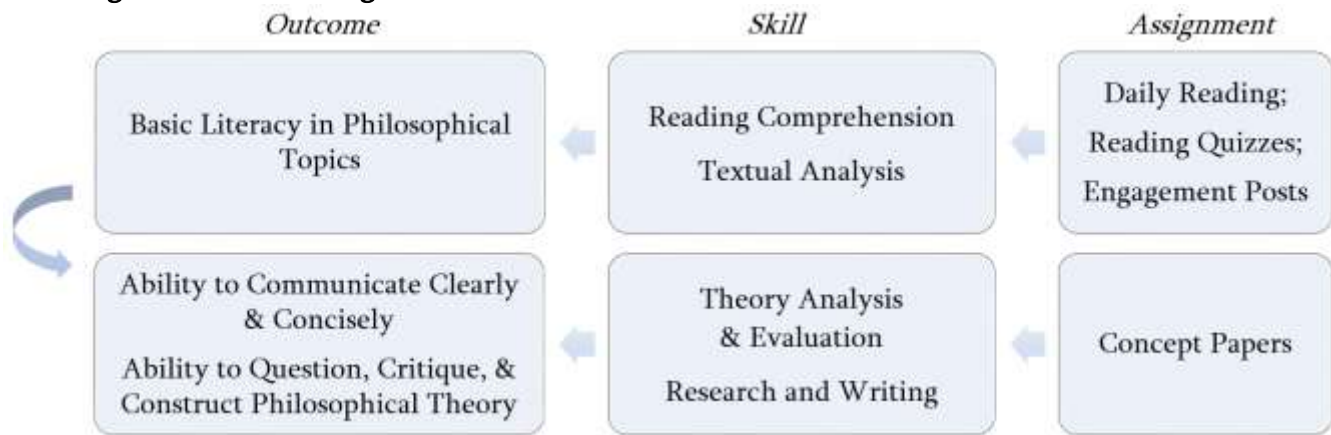
Course Materials

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.

1. A course pack, available at [APMOK](#) on 500 E. 2nd St (right across from campus). This is a **required text** for class: you must bring your hard copy of the reading to class *every* session (and I recommend you use it for studying as well). It will cost about \$30.
2. Online, on D2L. I have posted pdfs of each text, with the relevant date in the file name. Note that these files are posted for your convenience and accessibility. They are not a substitute for the course pack! It is very difficult to read/process this material when reading from a screen (Seriously: [the research is consistent](#) on this point).

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 Guides*, one-page supplements to each day’s reading that give background context, highlight key points, and suggest study questions. Daily Reading Guides are also **required texts**: material introduced there are fair game for quizzes and papers. My advice is to read the Daily Reading Guides *first*, then the day’s material, then the Handouts again.

Learning Outcomes & Assignments



Reading

You'll have 30-60 pages of reading per week in this course; the average is about 14 pages per class session. 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 or skip passages, so you won't waste your time reading pages that don't matter. But this also means that anything included is important, so you have to read it carefully. You will also have one page Reading Guides (see above) to help guide you through the material.

Daily Reading Quizzes

We will have low-stakes reading comprehension quizzes for each reading starting in the second week of the class (40 total). These short quizzes (5 questions each) will use a variety of short-answer questions (multiple choice, True/False, etc.), to diagnose how well you are getting the important points from each reading. These should be easy points that you earn simply by doing the minimal required work. Conversely, if you are doing poorly on these quizzes, you may need to change your study habits: come talk to me to discuss study strategies.

Engagement

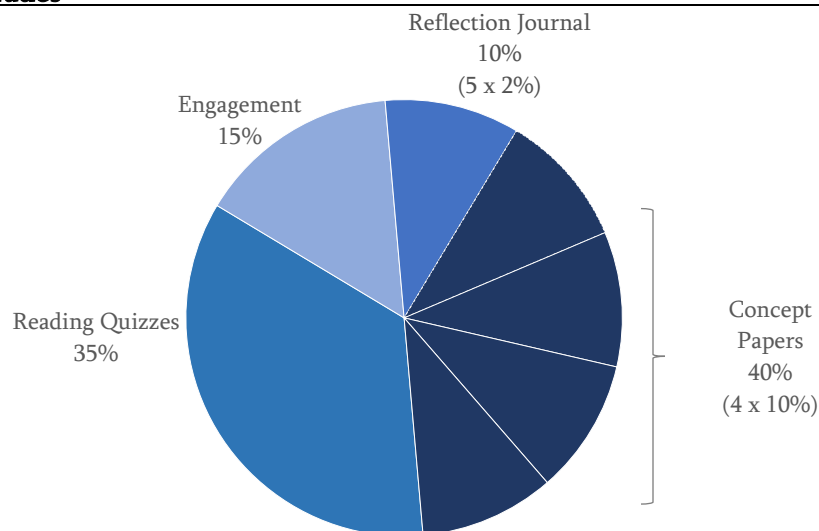
A second way of helping you work through course material is through social engagement, both with the professor and with your classmates. You will have a variety of ways to do this, depending on your schedule, learning preferences, etc., including things like discussion boards, chats, office hours, presentations, etc.

Reflection Journal

You will be given five prompts for reflective writing throughout the semester. They will be turned in, but it's basically just a completion assignment: the point is to give you space to work through some of the important topics from class without the pressure of writing a formal essay.

Concept Papers

Finally, you will have a set of small (3-4 pp) exposition papers throughout the class. Each paper will ask you to do two things: (a) show that you understand and can explain relevant course concepts, and (b) show how you can apply the concepts and themes from the course to real-life issues outside the classroom. Each paper is roughly the same in size and structure, but there will be variety of paper topics throughout the semester. I will give you a separate handout later with more specific instructions and advice on these papers.



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 40 reading quizzes during the semester, essentially one every day starting in the second week of class (we will skip two days at random). Each quiz will be worth 1 point total, which equals 1% of your total grade. However, there is a 35 point cap in this category: once you hit 35 points, you cannot earn any more. The 5 extra questions give you further attempts to continue raising your grade until you hit the 35 point cap. This means that you can miss a few questions (either by getting answers wrong or by skipping it entirely), and still get 100% in this category. This is like a curve but better, because it rewards you for making an effort every day, even if you don't always ace everything.

Engagement: This category is worth 15 points (= 15% of your final grade). Each individual contribution will be worth 1 point. There will be a variety of ways to earn these 15 points throughout the semester (participation in class meetings or office hours, use of discussion boards & chat functions, etc.). You should expect to do one per week.

Reflections: You will have 5 Reflection Journal Prompts during the semester: two in the first unit of class, and one for each unit after that. Each is worth 2 points, for 10 total (=10% of final grade).

Papers: There will be 4 Concept Papers spread throughout the semester, one for each unit. They will be worth 10 points each, for a total of 40 points (= 40% of final grade). You will have a new paper topic approximately every four weeks.

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.

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. I do make mistakes, and I have changed grades upon reflection before (raised or lowered, depending on the circumstances). 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 me to give you a grade you did not earn on the merits. Don't ask.

Schedule

This class will move at a brisk but regular pace. We will have a new set of readings for every class, three Reading Quizzes every week (starting 8.30), and an Exposition Paper every two weeks or so. Each reading will be due before class on the day it is assigned, and the accompanying quiz for that reading will also be due before class. It is your job to show you have a basic grasp of the material with the quiz; we'll then spend class time clarifying, expanding, and applying the material. But we cannot have a productive conversation about the material if you don't already have some grasp of it, which is why the quiz is before class rather than during or after.

Attendance

This class will operate on a 'Flipped Classroom' model. What this means is that most course content will be covered outside of class, through reading material, handouts, videos and podcasts, and other supplemental material. Likewise, all assignments will be done online. We will use class time for questions and discussion, to help you solidify and expand what you learned on your own.

Consequently, *physical attendance is not required in this class*. Attendance is not part of your grade. Moreover, all students will have access to the Extended Classroom webcam for the course, so you can watch the class if you are not able to attend in person.

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.*

Late Work

All assignments for this class will be online, through D2L. Quizzes for each week will be posted in advance, but each one will close at the start of class time on the day it is due. This means that each quiz must be completed *before* class starts. If you have a busy schedule (and who doesn't?) you may need to plan ahead to do quizzes, e.g. during the weekend before the week we cover that material.

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. I can't help unless I know you need it!

Engagement activities are due throughout the semester. This means you can do them at your convenience, on your own time. But it also means you cannot put them off until the end of the class: the only way to get full points in this category is to participate regularly from the beginning.

A 1-point late penalty will be deducted once every 24 hours after the submission deadline for Reflection Papers. Any work not turned in by midnight on Sunday, December 19th gets an automatic zero.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism Syllabus Statement: Academic dishonesty includes plagiarizing, cheating, turning in counterfeit papers, stealing academic materials, knowingly falsifying academic documents, accessing confidential academic records without authorization, disclosing confidential academic information without authorization, and turning in the same work to more than one class without the express permission of the instructors involved. Any student deemed to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action up to and/or including expulsion from the University. To help ensure academic integrity, faculty may employ a variety of tools including, but not limited to, university-sanctioned Turnitin.com. More information concerning this policy can be found in Section IV of the UCO Student Code of Conduct located at: <https://www.uco.edu/offices/student-conduct/files/codeofconduct-webfile.pdf>.

Given that much of this course is devoted to intellectual and moral virtues, it should be no surprise that it also has high standards for academic conduct. You are expected to consult and understand the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy (detailed in the Student Info Sheet linked below); 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.

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.

Title IX

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. 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. Per Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), pregnant and parenting students may request adjustments by contacting the Title IX Coordinator, at (405) 974-3377 or TitleIX@uco.edu. The Title IX Office is located in the Lillard Administration Building, Room 114D. For more information about your options, including reporting and confidential resources, please visit: <http://www.uco.edu/central/title-ix/index.asp>.

Student Information Sheet

Additional important university policies and information can be found here: <https://www.uco.edu/academic-affairs/files/student-info-sheet.pdf>

COVID Mask Policy (from Office of Academic Affairs)

Consistent with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission as of August 1, 2021, the University of Central Oklahoma recommends that all individuals wear a mask covering the mouth and nose when in public indoor spaces such as classrooms, laboratories, studio spaces, the library, the Nigh University Center, enclosed athletic facilities, and other shared indoor spaces on campus. While mask wearing is not required, the university encourages all members of the university community to follow the guidelines issued by the CDC based on conditions in Oklahoma County. This guidance may be revised at any point during the semester.

As detailed in the Student Code of Conduct, students are expected to be familiar with the UCO Coronavirus webpage, www.uco.edu/coronavirus and are expected to follow the recommendations and guidance published on that page. Because the recommendations and guidance are subject to change, students should check back often for updated information and requirements.

Students who follow these guidelines will not be penalized for class absences provided they follow their instructor's directions for making up missed assignments in a timely fashion, in conformity with the requirements and expectations outline in the class's syllabus. Instructors shall provide reasonable opportunities, consistent with the structure and objectives of the class, for students who are following these guidelines to participate in and to keep up with the work of the class.

As the conditions on campus and in the community evolve, events may occur that necessitate a change in the procedures, course schedule or modes of delivery. The information provided on www.uco.edu/coronavirus will be updated throughout the academic year. Procedure changes on this webpage and communicated via official correspondence from the university will supersede any prior guidance.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have had direct exposure to someone with COVID-19, file a report with the COVID-19 Response Team at:

https://uco.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_39Omw83BStDpw1L.

Recording Policy

Recording Policy: Due to limitations on the disclosure of personally identifiable information under certain federal privacy laws, students are not permitted to record class sessions nor to allow non-students to view online class sessions. Students registered with the UCO office of Disability Support Services may request accommodation

Schedule

8.23: Syllabus

8.25: Mezirow (2012) "Learning to Think Like an Adult"; Moore (2019) "A Student Perspective: A TL Course in Higher Ed"

8.27: McQuire (2018). *Teaching Yourself How to Learn*. Chs. 3, 5

8.30: Galef (2021) *The Scout Mindset*, Chs. 2,4

9.01: Marcus (2008) *Kluge*, Ch.1

9.03: Kahneman (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Ch.1

9.08: Eurich (2013) *Insight*, Ch.3

9.10: Fehlhauer (2017) "What know-it-alls don't know..."; Weir(2013) "Feel Like a Fraud?"

9.13: Dobelli (2011) *The Art of Thinking Clearly*, excerpts

9.15: McRaney (2011) *You Are Not So Smart*, excerpts

9.17: Warren (2018) "Blind Spot Bias"; Santos (2019) "GI JOE Fallacy"; Robson (2019) "The Stupidity Trap"

9.20: Koons & Pickavance (2017) *Atlas of Reality* Ch.2.1-2.2

9.22: Lynch (2004) *True to Life*, Ch. 1

9.24: Thalos (2013). "Truth Deserves to Be Believed"

9.27: Cassam, Quassim (2018) "Epistemic Insouciance"

9.29: Jaster & Lanius (2018) "What is Fake News?"

10.01: Stanley (2018) *How Fascism Works*. Chs. 3-4

10.04: Bradley (2015), *A Critical Intro to Formal Epistemology*, Ch. 1

10.06: Clifford (1877). "The Ethics of Belief, §1"; Mitova (2019). "The duty of inquiry, or why Othello was a fool"

10.08: Moore (2015). "Philosophical Humility..."; Holstein (2019). "How to Admit When you Don't Know Something"

10.11: Anti-Vax Diagnosis (several short pieces)

10.13: Navin (2013) "Competing Epistemic Spaces: How Social Epistemology Helps Explain Vaccine Denialism"

10.15: *Fall Break - No Class*

10.18: *Social Epistemology* - Schoenfield (2020); Lenz (2015); Popescue (2018)

10.20: Grasswick (2018) "Epistemic Autonomy in a Social World of Knowing"

10.22: Nguyen (2018). "Escape the Echo Chamber"

10.25: Lackey (2012) "What's the rational response to everyday disagreements?"

10.27: Nichols (2014) "The Death of Expertise"; Nichols (2017) "The Death of Expertise as a Decline of Trust"

10.29: Ho, Anita (2011). "Trusting Experts and Epistemic Humility in Disability"

11.01: Origg (2012) "Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Trust"

11.03: Medina (2018) "Misrecognition and Epistemic Injustice"

11.05: Jones (2012). "The Politics of Intellectual Self-trust"

11.08: Toole (2019) "From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression"

11.10: Táíwò (2020) "Being-in-the-Room Privilege - Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference"

11.12: Anderson (2017) "Epistemic Injustice and the Philosophy of Race"

11.15: Annas (2011) *Intelligent Virtue*, Ch. 2; Robertson & Katsunori (2021) "In praise of habits"

11.17: Zagzebski (2018) "Intellectual Virtues: Admirable States of Character"

11.19: Baehr (2018). "The Four Dimensions of Intellectual Virtue"

11.22: Yu (2010) "The Mean, the Right, and Archery"

11.24-16: *Thanksgiving: No Class*

11.29: Watson (2018) "Curiosity and Inquisitiveness"

12.01: Hack (2015) "Credulity and Circumspection"

12.03: Baril (2016) "The Role of Epistemic Virtue in the Realization of Basic Goods"

12.06: McGonigal (2010) *The Willpower Instinct*, Ch. 3

12.08: Clear, James (2018) *Atomic Habits*, Chs. 2-3

12.10: Miller (2018) *The Character Gap*, Ch. 9

12.17: Final Reflection Paper due