

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

**PHIL 1113: Introduction to Philosophy**

CRN: 25061

MWF 11:00 AM-11:50 AM

Liberal Arts South, Rm. 264

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Office: Liberal Arts North, 204A

Office Hours: M,W 3:30-4:00 PM, T,Th 10:00-11:00 AM (and by appointment)

**Course Description:**

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"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, (5) provide rationally persuasive arguments in defense of their own beliefs about a variety of controversial issues in philosophy, and most importantly (6) begin the life-long project of improving their own epistemic character (that is, to literally make yourself a better person).

**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 philosophical texts 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

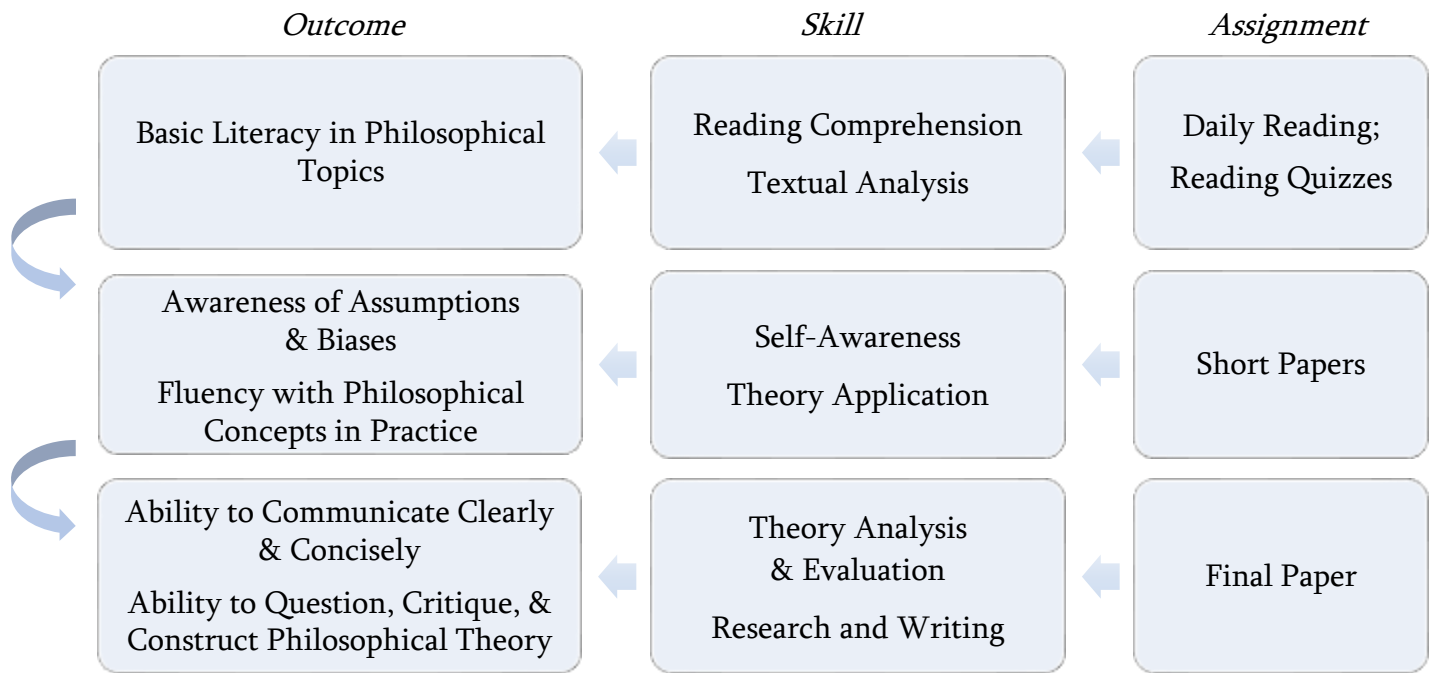
**Course Materials**

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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. These works are available in two settings:

1. A course pack, available at [APMOK](#) on 500 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 \$25.
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!

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 40 pages of reading per week in his course; the average is about 14 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 in class almost every day. 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. If you find yourself in this position, come talk to me about study strategies.

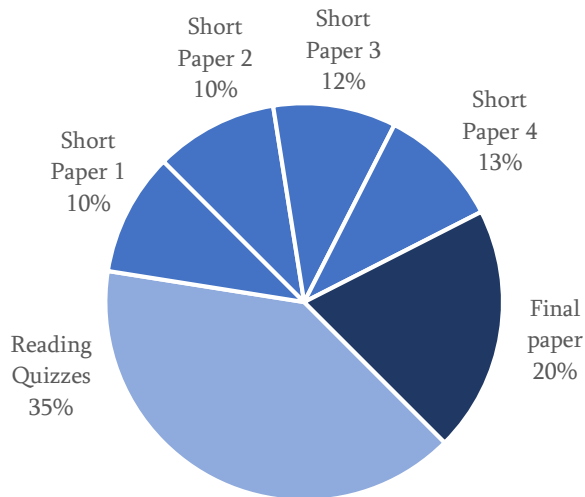
*Short Papers<sup>1</sup>*

We will have four short papers in this class, one every three weeks (growing from 2-3 pp to 6-8 pp as the term progresses). These papers will give you the opportunity to connect the material from class to issues you find interesting or important outside of class. Each paper will require you to show both that you understand course content and that you can apply this content in novel settings.

*Final Paper<sup>1</sup>*

For the class's final assessment, you'll be asked to write a medium-length paper (8-10 pp, c. 3000 words) which will draw on material from throughout the entire course. In essence, the final paper is simply an expanded version of a short paper, but with added requirements for research and higher standards for composition and argumentation. This assignment is a take-home paper, but will be due at the scheduled Final Exam time (11:00 - 12:50 p.m. Monday, December 9)

<sup>1</sup> I'll give you more information about both short and final papers, including prompts and rubric, in handouts later in the semester.



### 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 42 total class meetings, and we will have a quiz in around 40 of those meetings. Each quiz will be worth 1 point total, which equals 1% of your total grade, for a total of 35 points. Because there are more quizzes than points available, you can miss 5 quizzes worth of questions with no penalty (either by missing the quiz, or by getting questions wrong on a quiz you attempted). Conversely, you can only get a maximum 35 possible points out of the 40 quizzes. In other words, you will get more than 35 chances to earn 35% points, which is like a curve but better, because it rewards people who regularly attend class but don't always ace the quizzes.

**Attendance:** Attendance is not, strictly speaking, part of your grade, and I will not take attendance in class. But since we have quizzes every day, your quiz grade functions as a *de facto* attendance grade, because you will get 25% on each quiz just for showing up.

**Papers:** There will be four papers in the class, which will fill an increasingly large proportion of your final grade. Paper 1 and Paper 2 are each worth 10 pts (= 10%), Paper 3 is worth 12 pts (= 12%), Paper 4 is worth 13 pts (= 13%), and the Final Paper is worth 20 pts. (= 20%)

**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 short 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 choose to 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.

## **Late Work & Make-Ups**

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Daily Reading Quizzes will be administered in class, usually in the first few minutes (though I reserve the right to hold them at any point in class). If you arrive to class late and miss the quiz, you may not make it up. Likewise, if you skip class that day, you may not make up the quiz, because there is a built-in allowance of missed quizzes before you grade starts to be impacted.

Short Papers and the Final Paper will also 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 Sunday December 15<sup>th</sup> get an automatic '0'.

## **Excused Absences**

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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**

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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 (<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 whether something constitutes academic dishonest, ask. I am 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 the University. Don't try it.

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.

## **Tech Policy**

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

Four main reasons for this policy:

- 1) You might think you can multi-task well. [You are incorrect](#). Even if you were miraculously among the 2% of good multi-taskers, you would still distract those around you.
- 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, better, type them out after class.
- 4) It is [distracting](#) to other students, and [lowers grades for everyone](#).

So, unless you have an accommodation from DSS (see below), no electronic devices in class. This won't be a big deal, because you'll be too busy thinking, writing, and discussing to need them anyway.

## **Reasonable Accommodations Policy**

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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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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>.

## **Physical and Mental Health**

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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**

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

## Schedule

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- 1.13 Hayes & Roberts (2018) "Why is this Happening? Assessing America's Information Crisis"  
1.15 McQuire (2018) *Teaching Yourself How to Learn*, Ch. 3  
1.17 Lombrozo (2016) "Scientist or Lawyer?"; Galef (2016) "Soldier or Scout"
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- 1.20 MLK - No class  
1.22 Koons & Pickavance (2017) *Atlas of Reality*, Ch. 2.1-22  
1.24  
1.27 Lynch (2004) *True to Life*, Ch. 1  
1.29 Barney (2016) *On Trolling*; Zagzebski (2016) 1.3-4  
1.31 Arendt; Butler (2011); Jones (2017); Berkowitz (2013)
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- 2.03 Marcus (2008), *Kluge* Ch. 1  
2.05 Kahneman (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow* Ch.1.1, 1.3, 1.5  
2.07 Mischel (2014) *The Marshmallow Test*, Chs. 1-3  
2.10 Dobelli, *The Art of Thinking Clearly*, excerpts; Rea (2015) "Blind Spot Bias"  
2.12 McRaney, *You Are Not So Smart*, excerpts; Santos (2019) "GI JOE Fallacy"  
2.14 Fehlh Haber (2017) "What know-it-alls don't know..." , Weir (2013) "Feel like a Fraud?"  
2.17 Eurich (2013) *Insight*, Ch. 3  
2.19 Tekin (2018), Birhane (2017), Tobia (2017)  
2.21 Brogaard (2017) "Dual Process Theory and Intellectual Virtue"
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- 2.25 Clifford (1877) "The Ethics of Belief"  
2.26 Mitova (2018) "The duty of inquiry, or why Othello was a fool"  
2.28 Bradley (2015) *A Critical Introduction to Formal Epistemology*, excerpts  
3.02 *Bayesian Reasoning*: Dvorsky (2013); Lee & King (2017); Sotala (2010)  
3.04 *Flat-Earthers*: Rathi (2018); Weill (2018)  
3.06 *Conspiracies*: Main (2018); Jacobs (2016); Effingham (2018);  
3.09 Douglas (2017) "The Psychology of Conspiracy Theorists"; Abalakina et al (1999)  
3.11 De Cruz (2018) "Believing and Belonging"; Imhoff (2018) "Want to feel unique?"  
3.13 Cassam (2015) "the Intellectual Character of Conspiracy Theorists"
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- 3.16-20 Spring Break  
3.23 Gelfert (2011) "Who is an Epistemic Peer?"  
3.25 Nagel (2006) *Epistemology: A VSI*, Ch.6  
3.27 Lackey (2012) "What is the rational response to everyday disagreements"  
3.30 Origgi (2012) "Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Trust"  
4.01 LA Symposium - No class  
4.03 Nguyen (2018) "Escape the Echo Chamber"  
4.06 Nichols, Tom (2014) "The Death of Expertise"; Nichols (2017) "The Death of Expertise as a Decline of Trust"  
4.08 Zagzebski (2014) "Trust"  
4.10 Jones (2012) "The Politics of Intellectual Self-trust"
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- 4.13 Zagzebski (2018) "Intellectual Virtues: Admirable States of Character"  
4.15 Baehr (2018) "The Four Dimensions of Intellectual Virtue"  
4.17 Yu (2010) "The Mean, the Right, and Archery"  
4.20 Baril (2016) "The Role of Epistemic Virtue in the Realization of Basic Goods"  
4.22 Watson (2018) "Curiosity and Inquisitiveness"  
4.24 Hack (2015) "Credulity and Circumspection"  
4.27 McGonigal (2010) *The Willpower Instinct*, Ch. 3  
4.29 Thaler & Sunstein (2009) *Nudge*, Chs. 5 & 16  
5.01 Miller, Christian (2018) *The Character Gap*, Ch. 9
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- 5.04 Scheduled Final Exam Time (Monday, 11:00 AM - 12:50 PM)