

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy [Taught Summer 2019]

Instructor: Joshua Kissel
Joshuakissel2014@u.northwestern.edu
Office Hours: W 10-12 in Kresge 3430 and by
appointment

Class Meeting:
Week 1: W/F 2-5:30
Weeks 2-4: M/W 2-5:30
Location: Kresge 2331

***NOTE:** This course meets Monday and Wednesday from 2-5:30 *except* the first week when it meets 2-5:30 Wednesday (June 26th) and Friday (June 28th)

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to philosophy. Valid and sound argument is the philosopher's tool and the truth is its intended product. This course trains students to use this tool themselves. We'll focus on the skills necessary to evaluate the arguments of others as well as to produce valid and sound arguments ourselves. We'll do this through an exploration of some of the most important discussions of philosophy.

Our course begins with a discussion of knowledge, what philosophers call 'epistemology.' We'll struggle with the problem of skepticism and the possibility that we're being tricked by an evil demon to perceive an external world that isn't there. We'll then discuss the problem of personal identity and the self. If I enter a teleporter that copies my body, cell by cell, and rebuilds a copy on Mars, did it rebuild *me*? We'll then shift our attention to the questions of moral and political theory and try to answer questions like: "What is the scope and demandingness of morality? How much do I owe the poor or other nonhuman animals?" We'll also engage more theoretical questions like "What would make a good moral theory?" We next widen our focus to the level of society. We'll first think about what justice entails using a veil of ignorance thought experiment. We'll also explore an analogical argument that bosses are like dictators and that as with the state, the workplace should be more democratic. In another class we'll ask if a camping trip can demonstrate the moral superiority of socialism. In our final class we ask whether we can legitimately judge other people, societies, and cultures, or if instead truth is more relative.

After a few intense weeks of study students will leave this course with a better sense of what they believe, how to argue for it, and how to listen to and understand the views of their interlocutors.

Course Objectives; this course enables students to:

- (1) Evaluate the validity and soundness of arguments.
- (2) Contrast competing solutions to philosophical problems.
- (3) Identify important claims underlying their own philosophical positions.
- (4) Assess the justifiability of these claims.

In addition, students will acquire a background in philosophical topics including; critical reasoning, epistemology, personal identity, ethics, and political philosophy.

Absences:

Because this class is meets only 8 times and for 3 hours, there are no excused absences. If you have an emergency or need to miss for some other reason please let me know as soon as possible so we can sort something out.

Office Hours:

Wednesday’s from 10-12 I will be in Kresge 3430 sitting quietly behind a desk, staring at a wall unless students come to meet with me. This time is meant for you to ask questions, discuss philosophy, or just hang out. It is *your* time, and you do not need an excuse or any clarity about what you want to do. I request, but do not require, that you send me an email alerting me to when you want to come, and if you happen to know, what you plan to discuss.

If for whatever reason you cannot make my regular office hours, please send me an email asap with a range of time that you could meet, and we will try to work something out!

Screen Policy:

This class is a screen-free environment. This means no computers, tablets, phones, or other such devices. This is because I have found students participation and discussion is best when they are undistracted by their own screens or those of their peers. I share all my PowerPoints to make note-taking less laborious. If you violate the policy, you may be marked absent for the day. Special accommodations are exempted. [E.g., medical exemptions.]

Students with Disabilities:

Any student needing accommodations should speak directly to AccessibleNU ((847) 467-5530 or accessiblenu@northwestern.edu) and to me as early as possible in the quarter. Be aware that AccessibleNU will help arrange reasonable accommodations for both physical and mental health concerns. Barring unforeseen circumstances, any necessary arrangements should be made within in the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential.

General Grading Schema:

1. Participation and Attendance 15 % of total. Pass/Fail
2. Five Reading Responses: 10% of total. Check + (100)/Check (92)/Check -(85)
3. Three Scaffolding Paper Outlines: 30% of total. ‘A’-‘F’
4. One Final Paper (1200-1500 words)45% of total. ‘A’-‘F’

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94-100	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	60-69	60-0

Assignment Due Dates [Details for Particular Assignments to Come]

Assignment	(Some) Details	Due Date
------------	----------------	----------

Reading Responses:	Each response is due on Canvas at 1pm before the relevant class takes places. And each must be on a different week. EX: Responses to Linda Zagzebski must be submitted <i>before</i> June 28	Submit by 1 pm on: June 28 for your 1st July 1 for your 2nd July 8 for your 3rd July 15 for your 4th July 17 for your 5th
First Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic from class 2 or 3.	July 2 at 11:59 pm
Second Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic from class 4 or 5	July 9 at 11:59 pm
Third Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic from class 6 or 7	July 16 at 11:59 pm
Final Paper	This paper can be on any topic and may use any outline	July 20 at 11:59pm

General Course Outline: We have 8 sessions from June 26 through July 17.

Class	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1 – Wednesday 6/26 Introduction to Course	Validity and Soundness Thought Experiments	No Readings	Icebreaker Discussion
2 – Friday 6/28	Knowledge and Truth	Linda Zagzebski – What Is Knowledge? (25 pages) Miranda Fricker – Testimonial Injustice (21 pages) Listen to: Miranda Fricker talking about Epistemic Injustice on Philosophy Bites Podcast (13:47 minutes)	1 st Reading Response [On or Before June 28 th]
3 – Monday 7/1	Personal Identity	Derek Parfit – Personal Identity (26 pages) Watch: Personal Identity (8:32 minutes)	2 nd Reading Response [On or Before July 1 st] 1 st Paper Outline [11:59 pm July 2 nd] 5% of Grade
4 – Wednesday 7/3	Scope and Demandingness in Ethics	Peter Singer – Famine, Affluence, and Morality (16 pages) Alastair Norcross – Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases (17 pages)	

5 – Monday 7/8	Normative Ethical Theories	<p style="text-align: center;">Three Views</p> <p>Consequentialism; John Stuart Mill's <i>Utilitarianism</i>; Excerpts of Chapter 2. Read pages 4-8, 11-13, 16-18 [Optional to read sections "Happiness as an Aim", "Is Utilitarianism Chilly?", "Utilitarianism as 'Godless'", and "Expediency"] (10 pages)</p> <p>Deontology; David Velleman – A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics (33 pages)</p> <p>Virtue Ethics; Rosalind Hursthouse – Normative Virtue Ethics (8 pages)</p> <p>Recommended Watching (10 minutes):</p> <p>Kant & Categorical Imperatives: Crash Course Philosophy (10:28 minutes)</p> <p>Utilitarianism: Crash Course Philosophy (10 minutes)</p>	<p>3rd Reading Response [On or before July 8th]</p> <p>2nd Paper Outline [11:59 pm July 9th] 10% of Grade</p>
6 – Wednesday 7/10	Justice; Rawls behind the Veil of Ignorance Game Democracy in the Workplace	<p>Robert Nozick – Anarchy, State, and Utopia, Excerpt from Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. (41 pages)</p> <p>Elizabeth Anderson – How bosses are (literally) like dictators Dictatorship at Work (~3000 words)</p>	In Class Activity: The Veil of Ignorance Game based on John Rawls' <i>A Theory of Justice</i>
7 – Monday 7/16	Socialism and Capitalism	G.A. Cohen – <i>Why Not Socialism</i> (23 Pages)	<p>4th Reading Response [On or Before July 15th]</p> <p>3rd Paper Outline [11:59 July 16th] 15% of Grade</p>
8 – Wednesday 7/17	Can We Really Judge Others?	<p>Mary Midgley – Trying Out One's New Sword (7 pages)</p> <p>Susan Moller Okin – Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women (20 pages)</p>	<p>5th Reading Response [On or Before July 17th]</p> <p>Final Paper [11:59 July 20th]</p>

		Martha Nussbaum – Judging Other Cultures (12 pages)	45% of Grade
--	--	---	--------------