

PHIL101 UBC 2017 Summer Term 2

PHIL101

In this course we will explore contemporary philosophical questions in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of emotions

Instructor

Jasper Heaton

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Meeting

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10am – 1pm

Room Buchanan D322

Office Hours

I hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays, 1pm – 2pm, in Buchanan E274

Overview

Philosophers strive for precision and clarity in thought and expression. Philosophical discussions are often abstract, but how we answer philosophical questions shapes how we live our lives, and how we interact with others and with the world we find ourselves in.

In this course we will explore contemporary philosophical questions in epistemology, the study of knowledge, metaphysics, the study of being, and the philosophy of emotions. We will consider whether and how we should trust the testimony of experts. We will consider whether things like money are as real as things like elements. We will consider whether anger has any political value, and whether love and envy are compatible. Reflecting on these questions and the issues that surround them will be helpful as you go forward in life, whether you study more philosophy or not.

Course Aims

By the end of this course you will have:

- Acquired analytical tools for achieving the precision and clarity of philosophical thought and expression
- Grasped core philosophical concepts
- Developed the ability to construct an argument and defend a thesis
- The ability to engage critically with a text
- Done philosophy

Course Readings

All readings will be made available online through connect. You do not have to buy any books for this course!

If you have problems accessing any of the material, please email me.

Each reading will be a chapter from a book or an article from an academic journal.

(**Note** that the final exam will only cover material from the required reading)

Class Structure

We meet twice a week for three hours; three hours is a long time to do one thing! Each meeting will be divided into a lecture and a group discussion, separated by a short break. I will spend the first half of each meeting introducing the material for that day, and you will spend the second half of each meeting discussing that material in small groups.

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Assessment

There are three assessment components on this course:

- **Final exam** worth **40%** of your final grade (**August 16th, at 12pm, Buchanan B215 – 2.5 hours**)
- **Midterm Essay** worth **40%** of your final grade (due on **Monday July 31st**)
- **Class participation** worth **20%** of your final grade (**every meeting**)

Attendance & Participation

The best way to learn philosophy is to do philosophy. As you've just seen, in-class participation counts for a significant portion of your final grade. You will receive credit for the participation component of the assessment by responding to the material for that meeting. These will take place every meeting. As such, it is important that you attend every meeting.

Participation Credit

You will receive participation credit by responding to the material for each meeting. There are 10 participation exercises to complete for credit in this course. Participation credit is assigned on a yes/no basis – that is, if you complete the participation exercise for that meeting, you will receive full credit for that exercise. Failure to complete an exercise will result in no credit for that exercise.

You complete a participation exercise by doing two things:

First put your name and student number on the participation exercise sheet in class

Second email me your response to that meeting's material **by 5pm the following day**

Your emailed response can **either be something you discussed with your group in reaction to the discussion questions, or a reaction to the reading material for that meeting.**

All emailed responses should have the following subject title: student number, PHIL101 Response, date of meeting (e.g. 12345678, PHIL101 Response, July 5th)

Emailed responses should be **at least one paragraph in length** (approx. 4-8 sentences).

When you complete both of these steps, you receive participation credit for that meeting.

Deadline for responses is **11.59pm of the following day**. So, for example, responses for the material of the meeting on July 12th is due at 11.59pm of July 13th.

Midterm Essays

The midterm essay is split into two components:

- **Draft of essay** due **Monday July 24th** worth **10% of the essay component**
- **Finished essay** due **Monday July 31st** worth **30% of the essay component**

It is important that you complete your essay drafts by the due date, as during class on the 24th we will use those drafts as the basis for the participation exercise that week, where you will review each others' drafts and provide feedback.

Late Work

It is important to submit your work on time. However, I am happy to grant extensions to reasonable requests.

Unexcused late work will be subject to the following penalties:

- Submitted **within 5 days** of the due date will receive a **10% penalty**
- Submitted **within more than 5 days but less than 10 days** of the due date will receive a **20% penalty**
- Submitted **more than 10 days** after the due date **will receive a zero**
- Late participation exercises will not receive credit

Accessibility

Access & Diversity works with the University to create an inclusive living and learning environment in which all students can thrive. The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Access and Diversity unit: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity>

You must register with the Disability Resource Centre to be granted special accommodations for any on-going conditions.

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Academic Conduct & Plagiarism

It is your responsibility to understand UBC's rules regarding plagiarism.

Plagiarism is intellectual theft. It occurs when an individual presents another person's work as their own.

Proper scholarship involves examining and referring to other people's work, but when do you use other people's work you must acknowledge it as theirs and attribute it to them through some method of proper academic citation. Failure to properly attribute people their work constitutes plagiarism, as you are then passing their work off as your own.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Minor infractions will result in the plagiarized work receiving a zero. Serious infractions may result in failing the course.

Academic Citation

There is no required citation method for this course. Please feel free to use whichever method you are most comfortable with.

Here is UBC's guide on citation <http://help.library.ubc.ca/evaluating-and-citing-sources/how-to-cite/>

Classroom Conduct

The study of philosophy can be exceedingly personal, as many questions in philosophy relate directly to issues people may have experienced throughout in their personal lives. As such, it is especially important to respect the diversity of opinions and perspectives you will encounter in this course, both of those philosophers we read and of your fellow students. We will not shy away from critically engaging with difficult questions, but remember that critical engagement is not an invitation to be unpleasant. Philosophy is a discursive discipline, and the best discussions take place in a comfortable, friendly atmosphere that allows for everyone's voice to be heard.

Schedule & Readings

Week 1

Wednesday 5th

Introducing Philosophy and Introducing Descartes

Reading:

Rene Descartes, *First Meditation*

Jennifer Nagel, *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 2 & Ch. 3

Week 2

Monday 10th

Skepticism and the Standards for knowledge

Reading:

Jennifer Nagel, *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, Ch. 3, Ch. 4, & Ch. 5

Wednesday 12th

What is Testimony and is it a Source of Knowledge?

Reading:

Philosophy Tube, *Can You Trust Testimony?*

Week 3

Monday 17th

Experts: Who are they, and should we listen to them?

Reading:

Alvin Goldman, *Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?*

Wednesday 19th

Realism and the Natural World

Reading:

Ian Hacking, *A Tradition of Natural Kinds*

Week 4

Monday 24th

Draft of Essays Due

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Essay Writing and Peer Review

Wednesday 26th

Realism and the Social World

Reading:

Sally Haslanger, *Social Construction: Myth and Reality*

Week 5

Monday 31st

Midterm Essays Due

The Metaphysics of Race

Reading:

Videos - Racial Ontology Part 1, Racial Ontology Part 2, Racial Ontology Part
Racial Ontology part 4

Wednesday 2nd

Anger & Politics

Reading:

Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*

Week 6

Monday 7th

Is Anger a Political Emotion?

Reading:

Amia Srinivasan, *The Aptness of Anger*

Wednesday 9th

Romantic Love and Envy

Reading:

Sara Protasi, *On Envy of the Beloved*

Tips on Doing Philosophy

The following are some very general tips on how to approach the study of philosophy and succeed.

Do the readings! Lectures will not just be a regurgitation of the reading material; they will describe the material, but move ahead with it with interpretation and analysis. Doing the readings before class will allow you to better follow what is covered in the lectures. Moreover, doing the readings will make for better discussions, and will enable you to participate in the day's conversation.

Listen carefully in lectures. Do not just try and write everything down that your lecturer is saying. Instead, try to discern the themes of what's being discussed (don't lose the forest for the trees).

Read carefully and critically. Philosophy is difficult, in part because of the nuance and complexity of philosophical writing. Be prepared to re-read difficult passages. Make notes of your reactions in the margins – this is better than just underlining or highlighting passages, as it forces you to slow down and think. If you feel you're burning out, take a break and return to the text with fresher eyes.

Talk about the readings, the lectures, and the topics they cover with others (whether they're classmates or friends not doing philosophy themselves). Try explaining the topic/issue/passage to them, putting things in your own words. Ask them to do the same. Explore each other's questions and concerns, and see what resolutions you can reach.

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Philosophy is difficult, and philosophical topics are complex. Avoid conclusions like “well that’s just *obviously* right/wrong”. Little is obvious in philosophy. If you think something is or is not the case, think about why it is or is not the case and articulate your reasons.

Other Resources

The following are some online resources you may find helpful.

[The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy](#)

A repository of entries surveying most topics in philosophy. The articles here are approachable for students new to philosophy.

[The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy](#)

A repository of entries surveying most topics in philosophy. The articles here are more complex and detailed than those of the Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, and will be more useful if you have some familiarity with the topics being discussed.

[Philosophy Tube](#)

A series of short videos in which a PhD student explains a variety of philosophical topics and questions. Excellent for first-time exposure to philosophy.

[Philosophy Bites](#)

A series of interviews with professional philosophers discussing the topics they are interested in, the questions they consider, as well as their own answers to them. The discussions can get complex and technical at times, but are typically approachable if you are new to those topics.