

Course Outline

PHIL 1100, 005, Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics, Social and Political

Year and semester: 2025, Summer

Course Format: Online, Asynchronous

Credits: 3

Transfer Credit: For information, visit
bctransferguide.ca

Course Description, Prerequisites, and Corequisites:

An introduction to a variety of the classic responses to the question "How should I conduct my life?" This is one of the most fundamental questions all of us must ask, and we will think about three possible answers from classical ethical theories: one should live one's life in a way that maximizes utility; in a way that is rationally self-governed; in a way that is virtuous. We will also discuss the State. States massively affect the lives of the people who live in them, and even those who live outside of them. We will think about some philosophical issues relating to these kind of power and rebellion. Finally we will think about love. Some say love is everything, or that it can "conquer all." But love is also confusing, personally and philosophically. We will consider different kinds of love and what is required of romantic love, and then think about the social significance of loneliness.

This course has no prerequisites.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze an author's writing and identify their argument
- Construct and motivate their own arguments, and articulate their thoughts in a clear philosophical manner
- Write a philosophical essay
- Provide feedback to others
- Understand classical philosophical theories of ethics
- Explain the justification of political authority and what it means to be free
- Think more clearly about love and our social obligations to others

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Office Hours: Online, Monday, 1.30 - 2.45pm and Thursdays, 6 - 7pm

Textbook and Course Materials:

All readings for this course are free and available online and are linked on the syllabus, or are available on Brightspace.

Course Structure and Modes of Interaction:

Although this is an online asynchronous course it involves a lot of interaction in various different ways.

Student - Student

- Weekly activities on discussion forums
- Peer review exercises
- Answering each others' course queries

Student - Instructor

- Watching recorded lectures
- Attending office hours - **I strongly encourage you to attend office hours**
- Oral examination for written work
- Email

Student - Course materials

- Reading articles and watching videos
- Reading slides
- Summarizing and evaluating course materials

Weekly Assignments

Please be aware that these assignments are due every week. In online asynchronous courses it is important that we all stay engaged with the course at regular intervals, and these assignments are designed to help us do that. They are designed to take around two hours a week. (Roughly 1 hour per quiz, 1 hour for forum post and icebreaker question).

Videos, Slideshows, and Readings

You are expected to read the readings listed in the syllabus for each week.

The videos and slideshows I upload are intended to supplement your reading and help you understand the texts. They will highlight the key concepts and ideas, provide context for the readings, and draw your attention to specific passages.

Though this may vary week to week you should expect to spend roughly two hours a week on the readings, in addition to the time you spend watching the videos and looking at the slideshow.

Reading philosophy requires a particular kind of engagement and attention.

For a nice guide to how to read philosophy, [see here](#)

Grading:

Rubrics will be made available for each assessment

[Grades, Grade Points, & Notations](#)

Assignments and Weighting:

There are four types of assignment: three weekly activities, two essays, two peer review exercises, and a midterm. Please read everything carefully.

1. Weekly Activities - 40% of Final Grade

These assignments are to be completed every week.

Due 11.59pm Sunday of that week (e.g. weekly assignments due in Week 3 are due 11.59pm Sunday June 25th).

You can submit these assignments late, but you will receive a late penalty (10% penalty within one week late, 25% penalty for more than one week late, 50% penalty for more than two weeks late).

Activity 1 - Icebreaker Question, 2pts

- A quick question to get your minds working for the week. Answers should be 2-4 sentences.

Activity 2 - Definitions and Concepts, 8pts

- A short quiz asking you to define key concepts and ideas from the readings that week. Answers should be short paragraphs (2-5 sentences).

Activity 3 - Posting on the Forum, 5pts

- Each week there will be a forum with a set discussion question. You must **post a thread** providing your own answer to that question, and you must **also reply to at least two** other students. More details below.
- Posts should be roughly one paragraph, replies should be 2-4 sentences.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

- Posting on the forum requires you to reply to other students. This means that **posts cannot be made last minute!** Make sure you are checking the discussion forums regularly.

Extra Credit Available - if students post more than one reply for more than 50% of the weeks, they will receive 5pts extra credit

2. Essay 1 - 15% of Final Grade

Due June 15th by 11.59pm

1,100 words

Pre-set topics (to be announced)

Essays will be **examined by oral examination** (details below)

Full details and instructions for Essay 1 available on Brightspace

3. Peer Review for Essay 1 - 5% of Final Grade

Due June 15th by 11.59pm

Students provide each other with feedback on their drafts of Essay 1. Full details below.

4. Midterm Exam - 20% of Final Grade

Available Online Week 10, July 7th - July 13th

Short-answer exam covering the topics addressed in Modules 1 and 2

Details TBA

5. Essay 2 - 15% of Final Grade

Due August 6th by 11.59pm

1,300 words

Pre-set topics (to be announced)

Essays will be **examined by oral examination** (details below)

Full details and instructions for Essay 2 available on Brightspace

6. Peer Review for Essay 2 - 5% of Final Grade

Due August 6th by 11.59pm

Students provide each other with feedback on their drafts of Essay 1. Full details below.

Assignments Explanations

Expectations for Forum Post and Replies

Philosophy is best learned by doing it, and in this online asynchronous format the best way for us to do philosophy together is by engaging in these kinds of forum discussions. Online discussion has some advantages over in-person discussion, primarily that it gives you more time to think about and formulate your answers and responses.

The forums for this course are a place where we can **substantively and respectfully engage** with each other. (See policy below on classroom environment).

Each forum will have a specific question to address. But in your answers you should feel free to make new connections and bring in additional ideas and philosophical themes as you think they are relevant.

Each week you must start a new thread in which you give your answer to the question. Title your thread “[student name], answer, [week number]”

Your answer should:

- Be roughly one paragraph long (5-7 sentences)
- Give your reasons for your answer. Don’t just say “I agree/disagree.” We want to know **why** you think what you think
- Engage with some of content from the videos, slides, or readings from that week

Each week you must also respond to at least one other student’s thread.

Your responses should:

- Be roughly 2-4 sentences long
- Engage with something in the original post you are responding to
- Can agree or disagree, but you must say **why** and give your reasons
- Responses can also critically support, i.e. you can agree but with caveats

Peer Review Exercise

In this activity you will exchange drafts of your essays 1 and 2 with other students. They will provide you feedback on your drafts, and you will provide them feedback on theirs.

Giving and receiving feedback is an important exercise. Our ideas often seem clear to us when they are in our own heads, but as soon as we have to explain our ideas to other people we can find things we’ve missed, or need to think more about. Talking about our ideas with other people is an important part of the writing process, and this exercise aims to give you that value.

Several weeks before the essay assignment is due a forum will become available where you can post to ask other students to share your work with each other.

You must provide feedback on at least one other student’s work

When you have found someone to share your work with, **email** each other your essay drafts and the feedback you provide, and **cc me on the emails you exchange with each other.**

Oral Examination, AKA “Viva”

A scholarly tradition is to examine students on their work via an oral examination known as a viva. These will be held online one on one with the student and instructor.

Vivas are useful for several reasons. For one, they help with knowledge retention. When you have to present your work to another person you tend to remember it better later. Having a viva also gives you a chance to talk about your ideas with an expert on that topic, and to explore things you might not have been able to fully explore in the essay.

You should think of the viva as a mini presentation.

In a viva you will be expected to:

- Give a presentation on your essay. What is it about? What do you argue, and why?
- Respond to questions as well as to potential objections to your view

Each viva will take 10 minutes.

Further details about scheduling will be announced later.

Detailed Course Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings
MODULE 1	How Should I Live?	
Week 1, May 5	Introductions Thinking Normatively	<i>The Best Criticism of Ethical Egoism</i> , Stephen Leach: Link here <i>Euthyphro</i> , Plato: Link here Pages 1-7
Week 2, May 12	Utilitarianism	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , John Stuart Mill, pages 12-15 and 48-54: Link here <i>Objections to Utilitarianism</i> , Jonathan Bennett, p. 12 and p. 16: Link here
Week 3, May 19	Deontology	<i>Kant's Categorical Imperative</i> , BBC In Our Time Podcast: Link here <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Immanuel Kant, chapter 1: Link here
Week 4, May 26	Trolley Problems and Making Arguments	The Trolley Problem The Trolley Problem in Real Life
Week 5, June 2	Virtue Ethics	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle, books I and II: Link here <i>Elucidations Podcast - Julia Annas Discusses Virtue Ethics</i> : Link here
MODULE 2	The State, Freedom, and Rebellion	
Week 6, June 9	Justifying the State Essay 1 Due June 15th 11.59pm Peer Review for Essay 1 Due June 15th 11.59pm	<i>Leviathan</i> , Thomas Hobbes, part 1, chapter 13 (link here) and part 2, chapter 17 (link here) The Social Contract, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, book 1: Link here
Week 7, June 16	Liberty and freedom Oct 8, peer review session	<i>Two Concepts of Liberty</i> , Isaiah Berlin, sections I and II: Link here <i>The Paradox of Tolerance</i> , United 4 Change: Link here
Week 8, June 23	The right, or the obligation, to rebel	<i>Conscience and Conviction: the Case for Civil Disobedience</i> , Kimberley Brownlee, Introduction. Reading available on Brightspace

Week 9, June 30	Political Emotions	<i>Radical Evil in the Lockean State: the Neglect of Political Emotions</i> . Martha Nussbaum. Reading available on Brightspace <i>The Case for Rage: Why Anger is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle</i> , Myisha Cherry, talk at the Hannah Arendt Centre for Politics and Humanities: Link here
MODULE 3	Love and Happiness	
Week 10, July 7	What is love? Midterm Exam Available Online	<i>Love's Bond</i> , Robert Nozick. Reading available on Brightspace
Week 11, July 14	Love and envy	<i>Envidio et Amo: on Envyng the Beloved</i> , Sara Protasi. Reading available on Brightspace
Week 12, July 21	Loneliness	<i>A Human Right Against Social Deprivation</i> , Kimberley Brownlee. Reading available on Brightspace
Week 13, July 28	Sex and relationships	<i>Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?</i> , Amia Srinivasan: Link here
Exam Period	Essay 2 Due August 6th 11 59pm Peer Review for Essay 2 Due August 6th 11.59pm	

Policies

As a student at Langara, you are responsible for familiarizing yourself and complying with the following policies:

College Policies:

[Student Code of Conduct - E1003](#)

[Academic Integrity - F1004](#)

[Academic Standing - Academic Probation and Academic Suspension - E2008](#)

[Appeal of Final Grade - E2006](#)

[Concerns about Instruction - F1002](#)

[Withdrawal from Courses and Deferred Standing - E2011](#)

Course Policies:

Content Warning and Respectful Online Classroom Policy

In this course we will cover a number of topics, issues, and real world events that may have affected the personal lives of students taking this course and the teachers teaching it. While it is important that we be able to freely pursue academic inquiry into these issues, it is equally important we be attentive and sensitive to the different ways people might be affected by these issues and by our study of them. Academic freedom is an important right we all have, but it is also an important responsibility we all share. As a student it is your right to bring your personal and lived experiences to your studies in this course. It is also your duty to be respectful of other people's experiences, no matter how different they are from your own. At its best the study of

philosophy is collaborative, constructive, and respectful of individuality. I hope that throughout this course we will all do our best to embody these norms.

Policy on Late Work

You are expected to submit your assignments by the due date. Failure to do so may result in late penalties or a fail grade for the course.

If **FOR ANY REASON** you are not able to submit your work on time **please contact me** to request an extension. Please do not send me personal medical information.

Policy on Email

I will answer all emails within 48 hours. If an issue is especially urgent, please put “URGENT” in the subject line.

If you haven’t heard back from me within 48 hours please feel free to start poking me for a response.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. If you are unsure, please come and speak with me.

Policy On The Use of A.I. (ChatGPT etc.)

You are **NOT** permitted to use AI to complete any of your assignments.

Copyright

All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture notes, lecture slides, assessments, reading materials) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

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