

Philosophy 100H: *Introduction to Philosophy*

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This class will be conducted online and synchronously. The class meetings will be on Zoom, at the regularly scheduled time for the class. (A link for the Zoom meeting for the class will be available on Moodle.) The Zoom meetings will also be recorded and made available to students. (The recordings will come with transcripts produced by Zoom's software. These are imperfect, but still useful for some purposes.) Office hours will take place on Zoom, as well.

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:20am-12:35pm.

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00pm-3:00pm, Thursday 1:00pm-2:00pm, and by appointment.

What are office hours? Office hours are designated times when I will be available to meet with students. There is no need to make an appointment if you would like to meet with me during these times – you can just drop in. (If you would like to meet with me, but prefer a time outside of my office hours, you can email to make an appointment.)

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to some of the most perplexing topics that have preoccupied humans for thousands of years, as well as an introduction to a distinctive way of thinking – a way of thinking that focuses on carefully presenting and evaluating arguments. No background is assumed or required.

By the end of the course, I hope that each of you will think of yourself as a philosopher – as someone who thinks hard about philosophical questions, using philosophical methods, at least some of the time. Thinking about such questions, and using such methods, will make your life better in a wide variety of ways. Some of these ways are mundane and practical. (Thinking like a philosopher will help you with your writing, critical thinking, and communicating, which in turn will help you perform better in

almost any career; and it will also help you to get better scores on the LSAT, GRE, MCAT, and GMAT.) And some of the ways in which thinking like a philosopher will make your life better are deeper and harder to measure. (Thinking like a philosopher will help you work through issues about what is meaningful and valuable, for example, and who you are, and how you should live your life.)

The course will cover selected topics in Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, Philosophical Theology, and Moral Philosophy. We will focus especially on the following questions:

- What can I know about the external world?
- What exactly am I – do I have an immaterial soul, or am I purely physical?
- Do I have free will?
- Is there a God?
- What makes right actions right?
- Does any of this matter?

The aim of the course will be to educate students about some of the main issues, theses, and arguments concerning these topics, so that the students may arrive at their own considered opinions on these matters.

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Read complicated texts, extract the arguments contained in those texts, and come up with the best objections to those arguments.
- Identify your core beliefs, and formulate them in a clear and straightforward way.
- Develop your own arguments in support of your beliefs.
- Understand the best arguments against your views, and come up with good objections to those arguments.
- Write clear, concise, and persuasive essays.

Course Requirements

- ❖ **Four Short Papers.** Your lowest paper grade is automatically dropped; each of the remaining three is worth one third of your final grade.

Academic Honesty

We will follow UMass's policy on academic honesty, and students in the course (like students in every course at UMass) are responsible for making themselves familiar with that policy. Please consult [this web page](#) for all of the details regarding the policy.

Required Readings

- "On Arguments" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two More Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Materialism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Theism" (handout available on course website).
- "Two Arguments for Atheism" (handout available on course website).
- Driver, Julia, "[The History of Utilitarianism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Fields, Keota, "Intensional Liar," *Philosophical Topics* 45 (2017), pp. 21-32. Available on Moodle.
- Griffith, Meghan, *Free Will: The Basics* (Routledge, 2013). (This is the one and only text you will have to buy for this class.)
- Markosian, Ned, "[Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain in a Vat?](#)," *Logos and Episteme* V (2014), pp. 161-181.
- Markosian, Ned, "[Rossian Minimalism](#)," *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 4 (2009), pp. 1-16.
- Shapiro, Lisa, "[Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Street, Sharon, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?" in Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, and Seana Shiffrin, *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* (Norton, 2015), pp. 685-693.
- Vogt, Katja, "[Ancient Skepticism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Recommended Readings

- Onscreen Document (a regularly updated document with arguments, definitions, etc., that are displayed during class; available on the course website).
- Cajete, Gregory, "Philosophy of Native Science," in Anne Waters (ed.), *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003)
- Copenhaver, Rebecca, "[Reid on Memory and Personal Identity](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Fara, Delia Graff, "Shifting Sands: An Interest-Relative Theory of Vagueness," *Philosophical Topics* **28** (2000), pp. 45-81.
- Fields, Keota, *Berkeley: Ideas, Immaterialism, and Objective Presence* (Lexington Books, 2011).
- Fields, Keota, "Review of Samuel Rickless, *Berkeley's Argument for Idealism*," *Philosophical Quarterly* **64** (2013), pp. 170-172.
- Gettier, Edmund, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* **23** (1963), pp. 121-123.
- Gracia, Jorge, and Vargas, Manuel, "[Latin American Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Gyekye, Kwame, "[African Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Haslanger, Sally, and Sveinsdóttir, Ásta Kristjana, "[Feminist Metaphysics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind, "[Virtue Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Levin, Janet, "[Functionalism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Lewis, David, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel," *American Philosophical Quarterly* **13** (1976), pp. 145-152.
- Markosian, Ned, "A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* **80** (1999), pp. 257-277.
- Melton, Desirée, "The Vulnerable Self: Enabling the Recognition of Racial Inequality," in Lisa Tessman (ed.), *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal* (Springer, 2009), pp. 149-164.
- Mills, Charles, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Cornell, 1998).
- Nelkin, Dana Kay, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

- Outlaw, Lucious T., "[Africana Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Phillips, Stephen, "[Epistemology in Classical Indian Philosophy](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Tong, Rosemarie, and Williams, Nancy, "[Feminist Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Vihvelin, Kadri, "[Arguments for Incompatibilism](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Waters, Anne (ed.), *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).
- Wong, David, "[Chinese Ethics](#)," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

About Short Papers

Details about the individual short paper assignments can be found below.

Each short paper is due at 5pm on the relevant day. (See the schedule below for specific due dates.) *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.* Any paper turned in after the deadline will be considered late. Late papers will be penalized 5 points (out of 100) per day. Late papers can be turned in until one week past the deadline, but will not be accepted after that. Extensions are possible. If you would like to request an extension on a paper, for any reason, you must email me *before* the deadline for that paper.

Important note: The papers you will be writing for this course are not research papers, in the traditional sense. I do not want you to report on what others have said about our topics. Nor do I want you to seek out ideas from other sources. (In fact, I would prefer that you not do this.) I want you to attend the lectures, participate in the discussions, do the assigned readings, study the Onscreen document, think hard about the topics, discuss them with others in our class, and then write your papers. The purpose of writing these papers is to learn how to develop and defend your own ideas, not someone else's ideas. (If, despite what I have just said, you do end up incorporating an idea from someone else into your paper, you must properly cite your source. If you do not, you will be in violation of UMass's academic honesty policy, which I will apply very strictly. Please talk to me if you have any questions about this.)

All students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources offered by UMass's [Writing Center](#), [Supplemental Instruction](#) program, and [Student Success](#) program.

Short Paper Assignments

- ❖ **First short paper assignment:** Write a 1200-1500-word paper (that's about 4-5 pages) in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view about whether human people have souls; (ii) present, explain, and evaluate your favorite argument for that view; and (iii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (1200-1500 words is the ideal length. If your paper is shorter than 1200 words, it is probably not detailed or substantive enough. If it is longer than 1500 words, it probably either contains too much material or else needs to be edited for concision. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.*)
- ❖ **Second short paper assignment:** Write a 1200-1500-word paper (that's about 4-5 pages) in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view in response to The Problem of Freedom and Determinism; (ii) present, explain, and evaluate your favorite argument for that view; and (iii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (1200-1500 words is the ideal length. If your paper is shorter than 1200 words, it is probably not detailed or substantive enough. If it is longer than 1500 words, it probably either contains too much material or else needs to be edited for concision. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.*)
- ❖ **Third short paper assignment:** Write a 1200-1500-word paper (that's about 4-5 pages) in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite view about whether there is a God; (ii) present, explain, and evaluate your favorite argument for that view; and (iii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (1200-1500 words is the ideal length. If your paper is shorter than 1200 words, it is probably not detailed or substantive enough. If it is longer than 1500 words, it probably either contains too much material or else needs to be edited for concision. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.*)
- ❖ **Fourth short paper assignment:** Write a 1200-1500-word paper (that's about 4-5 pages) in which you (i) formulate and explain your favorite ethical theory; (ii) present, explain, and evaluate your favorite argument for that view; and (iii) present, explain, and evaluate what you take to be the best argument against that view. (1200-1500 words is the ideal length. If your paper is shorter than 1200

words, it is probably not detailed or substantive enough. If it is longer than 1500 words, it probably either contains too much material or else needs to be edited for concision. Your paper should have normal fonts and margins. *You must submit your paper on Moodle using Turnitin.*)

Schedule

Date	Topic/Written Assignment	Reading
Feb	2 Course intro	
	4 Arguments; The BIV Argument	"On Arguments"
	9 The Problem of Skepticism	Vogt, "Ancient Skepticism"
	11 NM's solution to The Problem of Skepticism	Markosian, "Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain In a Vat?"
	16 The Mind-Body Problem	
	18 Two arguments against Materialism	"Two Arguments Against Materialism"
	23 Two more arguments against Materialism	"Two More Arguments Against Materialism"
Mar	25 Interactionism; The No Interaction Argument	Shapiro, "Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia"
	2 The Problem of Other Minds; A Popular Argument for Materialism	"Two Arguments for Materialism"
	4 Puzzles and paradoxes	Fields, "Intensional Liar"
	7 <i>First short paper due at 5pm</i>	
	9 The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 1-2
	11 Moral responsibility and alternative possibilities	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 3
	16 Compatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 4
	18 Incompatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 5
	23 Other views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 6
	25 Free will and science	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 7-8
28 <i>Second short paper due at 5pm</i>		
30 Intro to Philosophical Theology; cosmological arguments		
Apr	1 Design Arguments; ontological arguments	"Two Arguments for Theism"
	6 Two arguments for Atheism	"Two Arguments for Atheism"

	8	The Problem of Evil	
	11	<i>Third short paper due at 5pm</i>	
	13	Intro to ethical theory	
	15	Utilitarianism	Driver, "The History of Utilitarianism"
	20	<i>No class</i> (Wed schedule)	
	22	Kantian ethical theories	
	27	Rossian ethical theories	Markosian, "Rossian Minimalism"
	29	Metaethics; Realism and Nihilism; the meaning of life	Street, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?"
May	4	Course wrap-up	
	9	<i>Fourth short paper due at 5pm</i>	