

Philosophy 100: *Introduction to Philosophy*

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Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30am-12:20pm, Goessmann 64.

Discussion sections: various times on Friday, in various locations.

Professor Markosian's Office Hours: Tue 2:00pm-3:00pm, Thu 1:00pm-2:00pm. South College E421. (I will also be available on Zoom at these times.)

Teaching Assistants:

- Sophia Giddens (sgiddens@umass.edu). Office hours: Thu 12:30pm-2:30pm. South College E320.
- Marina Pérez del Valle (mperezdelval@umass.edu). Office hours: Mon 4:30pm-5:30pm, Wed 12:30pm-1:30pm. South College E312.
- Katie Wright (kbwright@umass.edu). Office hours: Tue & Thu 10:00am-11:00am. South College E414.

What are office hours? Office hours are designated times when your TA or your professor will be available to meet with students. There is no need to make an appointment if you would like to meet with your TA or your professor during these times – you can just drop in. (If you would like to meet with one of us, but prefer a time outside of our office hours, you can email to make an appointment.) It is a good idea to visit both your professor and your TA during their office hours either frequently or at least occasionally, both to chat about the course in general and to ask specific questions.

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, is an intrinsically worthwhile activity for most of us, but doing philosophy will also make your life better in a 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?
- What is the meaning of life?

The aim of the course will be to educate students about some of the main issues, positions, 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. (Note: Your entire grade will be determined by your short paper grades, and there will be no way to get extra credit or otherwise improve your grade from whatever is the average of your three best short paper grades.)

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.

Laptops, Tablets, and Cellphones

Empirical research shows that nearly everyone is better off not using any electronic devices in a lecture class – including laptops, tablets, and cellphones. Students learn much better when they focus on the professor, and take notes on paper.

If for whatever reason you are convinced that you are in the one percent when it comes to this general rule, you may use a laptop or tablet to take notes in class, but you must first take The Pledge, which involves solemnly swearing that you will use your device only for taking notes and never for anything else (in my class).

Using a cellphone (for texting, browsing, scrolling, emailing, etc.) is never allowed in my class.

Required Readings

- "On Arguments" (handout available on Moodle).
- "Two Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on Moodle).
- "Two More Arguments Against Materialism" (handout available on Moodle).

- “Two Arguments for Materialism” (handout available on Moodle).
- “Two Arguments for Theism” (handout available on Moodle).
- “Two Arguments for Atheism” (handout available on Moodle).
- 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*, 2nd Edition (Routledge, 2021). (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. Available on Moodle.
- Vogt, Katja, “[Ancient Skepticism](#),” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Recommended Readings

- 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*.
- Ryan, Sharon, "The Preface Paradox," *Philosophical Studies* **64** (1991), pp. 293-307.
- 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. (Note: Extensions are possible. If you would like to request an extension on a paper, for any reason, you must email your TA *before* the deadline for that paper.)

The papers you will be writing for this course are not research papers, in the traditional sense. We do not want you to report on what others have said about our topics. Nor do we want you to seek out ideas from other sources. (In fact, we would prefer that you not do this.) We want you to attend the lectures, participate in the discussions, do the assigned readings, study the PDFs of the slide shows, 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 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 we will apply very strictly. Please talk to your TA 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.*)

Grade Scale

93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+

73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
67-69.99	D+
63-66.99	D
60-62.99	D-
0-59.99	F

Schedule

Date	Topic/Assignment	Reading
Sep	6 Course intro	
	8 Arguments; The BIV Argument	Handout: "On Arguments"
	9 Discussion: Responses to The BIV Argument	
	13 The Problem of Skepticism	Vogt, " Ancient Skepticism "
	15 A solution to The Problem of Skepticism	Markosian, " Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain In a Vat? "
	16 Discussion: The Problem of Skepticism	
	20 The Mind-Body Problem	
	22 Two arguments against Materialism	Handout: "Two Arguments Against Materialism"
	23 Discussion: Responses to the two arguments	
	27 Two more arguments against Materialism	Handout: "Two More Arguments Against Materialism"
Oct	29 Interactionism; The No Interaction Argument	Shapiro, " Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia "
	30 Discussion: Interactionism	
	4 The Problem of Other Minds; A Popular Argument for Materialism	Handout: "Two Arguments for Materialism"
	6 Puzzles and paradoxes	Fields, "Intensional Liar"
	7 Discussion: The Mind-Body Problem	
	9 <i>First short paper due at 5pm</i>	
	11 The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 1-2
	13 Moral responsibility and alternative possibilities	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 3
	14 Discussion: The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	

	18	Compatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 4
	20	Incompatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 5
	21	Discussion: Compatibilism and Incompatibilism	
	25	Agent-Causal Libertarianism; other positions	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 6
	27	Free will and science	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 7-8
	28	Discussion: The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	
	30	<i>Second short paper due at 5pm</i>	
Nov	1	Intro to Philosophical Theology; cosmological arguments	
	3	Design Arguments; ontological arguments	Handout: "Two Arguments for Theism"
	4	Discussion: Arguments for Theism	
	8	Two arguments for Atheism	Handout: "Two Arguments for Atheism"
	10	The Problem of Evil	
	11	Discussion: Arguments for Theism and Atheism	
	13	<i>Third short paper due at 5pm</i>	
	15	Intro to ethical theory	
	17	Utilitarianism	Driver, " The History of Utilitarianism "
	18	Discussion: What makes right actions right?	
	22	<i>No class</i> (Friday schedule)	
	24	<i>No class</i> (Thanksgiving)	
	29	Kantian ethical theories	
Dec	1	Rossian ethical theories	Markosian, " Rossian Minimalism "
	2	Discussion: Utilitarian, Kantian and Rossian ethical theories	
	6	Metaethics; Realism and Nihilism; the meaning of life	Street, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?"
	8	Course wrap-up	
	9	Discussion: What is the meaning of life?	
	11	<i>Fourth short paper due at 5pm</i>	