

# **Philosophy 100: *Introduction to Philosophy***

(4 Credits)

Ned Markosian  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
markosian@umass.edu  
Fall 2023

**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 and Thur 1:00-2:00pm, and by appointment. South College E421.

## **Teaching Assistants:**

- Magdalene Dimitriadou (mdimitriadou@umass.edu). Office hours: Fri 10:00am-12:00pm, and by appointment. South College E410.
- Youngchan Lee (youngchanlee@umass.edu). Office hours: Tue 1:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment. South College E318.
- Kory Matteoli (bmatteoli@umass.edu). Office hours: Tue 1:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment. Office South College E320.

**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.

**Gen Ed Details:** This course satisfies the Arts and Literature (AL) category of the Social World curriculum area of UMass's Gen Ed requirement. Although it is not a traditional literature course, PHIL 100 involves a careful consideration of many of life's biggest questions (about knowledge, human nature, freedom, God, and the difference between

right and wrong). The course is designed to provoke comparison between different possible answers to each of these questions, to promote critical acuity through the formulation and evaluation of arguments for and against the various theses considered, and to encourage verbal expression through the writing of clear and persuasive essays. This is not a course in which students are taught the right answers to the big questions but, rather, a course in which students are taught how to think carefully about those questions so as to develop their own answers (and be able to defend them).

## 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 tests like the LSAT, MCAT, GMAT, and GRE.) 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 we 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 course grade will be determined by your short paper grades, minus any penalty for missing discussion sections, 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.)
- ❖ **Attendance in Lectures.** Although we will not employ a formal attendance policy, you are nevertheless required to attend the lectures, and I will present material in every lecture that will be instrumental to your doing well on the papers. In addition, in grading the papers, my TAs and I will pay careful attention to evidence that you have attended and understood the lectures. Students who do not attend the lectures will find it almost impossible to get good grades on their papers.
- ❖ **Attendance in Discussion Sections.** Your TA will take attendance in your discussion section, and missing more than two discussion section meetings will result in a penalty that will be applied to your final grade. (For missing 3 discussion section meetings the penalty will be 3 points on your course average; for missing 4 discussion section meetings the penalty will be 4 points; for missing 5 discussion sections meetings the penalty will be 5 points; and so on.)

## **Academic Honesty**

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. For more information on campus policies, please visit:

[https://www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/campus-policies](https://www.umass.edu/dean_students/campus-policies).

## **Accommodations**

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. For further information, please visit the UMass Disability Services website:

<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>.

## **Title IX**

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational settings that receive federal funds, the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students, free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual assault, sexual

harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and retaliation. This includes interactions in person or online through digital platforms and social media. Title IX also protects against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, or related conditions, including recovery. There are resources here on campus to support you. A summary of the available Title IX resources (including both confidential and non-confidential resources) can be found at the following link:

<https://www.umass.edu/equalopportunity/titleix>.

You do not need to make a formal report to access these resources. If you need immediate support, you are not alone. Free and confidential support is available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 365 days a year at the SASA Hotline 413-545-0800.

## **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. The studies show that 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 1 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 this class, or in the discussion sections for this 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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 should 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 particularly want you to seek out ideas from other sources. (In fact, we would prefer that you not do this.) We want you to do the assigned readings, attend the lectures, participate in the discussions, review 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, that is fine, but 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	5 Course intro	
	7 Arguments; The BIV Argument	Handout: "On Arguments"
	8 Discussion: Responses to The BIV Argument	
	12 The Problem of Skepticism	Vogt, " <a href="#">Ancient Skepticism</a> "
	14 A solution to The Problem of Skepticism	Markosian, " <a href="#">Do You Know That You Are Not a Brain In a Vat?</a> "
	15 Discussion: The Problem of Skepticism	
	19 The Mind-Body Problem	
	21 Two arguments against Materialism	Handout: "Two Arguments Against Materialism"
	22 Discussion: Responses to the two arguments	
	26 Two more arguments against Materialism	Handout: "Two More Arguments Against Materialism"
Oct	28 Interactionism; The No Interaction Argument	Shapiro, " <a href="#">Elisabeth, Princess of Bohemia</a> "
	29 Discussion: Interactionism	
	3 The Problem of Other Minds; A Popular Argument for Materialism	Handout: "Two Arguments for Materialism"
	5 Puzzles and paradoxes	Fields, "Intensional Liar"
	6 Discussion: The Mind-Body Problem	
	8 <b>First short paper due at 5pm</b>	
	10 <i>No class</i> (Monday schedule)	
	12 The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 1-2
	13 Discussion: The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	
	17 Moral responsibility and alternative possibilities	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 3
19 Compatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 4	
20 Discussion: Compatibilism and Incompatibilism		
24 Incompatibilist views	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 5	
26 Agent-Causal Libertarianism; other positions	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 6	

	27	Discussion: The Problem of Freedom and Determinism	
	31	Free will and science	Griffith, <i>Free Will: The Basics</i> , Ch. 7-8
Nov	1	<b><i>Second short paper due at 5pm</i></b>	
	2	Intro to Philosophical Theology; cosmological arguments	
	3	Discussion: Arguments for Theism	
	7	Design Arguments; ontological arguments	Handout: "Two Arguments for Theism"
	9	Two arguments for Atheism	Handout: "Two Arguments for Atheism"
	10	Discussion: Arguments for Theism and Atheism	
	14	The Problem of Evil	
	16	Intro to ethical theory	
	17	Discussion: What makes right actions right?	
	19	<b><i>Third short paper due at 5pm</i></b>	
	21	Utilitarianism	Driver, " <a href="#">The History of Utilitarianism</a> "
	23	<b><i>No class</i></b> (Thanksgiving break)	
	24	<b><i>No discussion section</i></b> (Thanksgiving break)	
	28	Kantian ethical theories	
	30	Rossian ethical theories	Markosian, " <a href="#">Rossian Minimalism</a> "
Dec	1	Discussion: Utilitarian, Kantian and Rossian ethical theories	
	5	Metaethics; Realism and Nihilism; the meaning of life	Street, "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?"
	7	Course wrap-up	
	8	Discussion: What is the meaning of life?	
	10	<b><i>Fourth short paper due at 5pm</i></b>	