

# PHIL 100J INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

## COURSE OUTLINE (section 002)

Given the unfortunate behaviour of a noticeable minority of students and the importance of in-class lectures and discussions in this course, **all electronic devices are banned from the classroom (i.e. must be kept turned off and away from students' desks and laps at all times)**. This includes phones, blackberries, etc., **as well as tablets and laptops**.

Students who do not comply will be asked to leave.

Exceptions will be made only for students who present a letter from the UW AccessAbility Services, clearly and unequivocally stating that they absolutely need to use their electronic device in the classroom for reasons of accessibility.

Semester: Fall 2019

Course weight: .5 (half a credit)

Type of contact hours: three lecture hours

Schedule: Tuesday-Thursday 1:00-2:20

Room: SJ1 3016

Professor: Bruno Tremblay

Department: Philosophy (St. Jerome's / University of Waterloo)

Office and phone number: SH 2001, 884-8111 (extension 28248)

Office hours (subject to change): Monday 1:00-2:30 and Friday 9:00-11:00

Email: btrembla@uwaterloo.ca

### Short Calendar Description

*This course seeks to introduce students to the nature of philosophy. This is done through the examination of core texts and figures in the history of philosophy as well as in the discussion of perennial philosophical questions.*

### General Description

The main problem which will be addressed in this course is the following: What is philosophy? In order to better understand the nature of philosophy, the student will have a chance to examine subsidiary questions like : What is the goal of philosophy? What is philosophy about? How does it proceed?, and also to get acquainted with some typical problems which this discipline tackles, such as : What and how do we know? What is the key to a better, human life? Is there a God? Etc. However, it must always be kept in mind that everything that will be done in this course will be done so as to give an opportunity to beginners to better understand what philosophy is. This introduction to philosophy, therefore, will be done in two steps. The first step consists of a presentation of philosophy itself, a presentation which will be general but which will appeal to our imagination and our senses as well as to our intellect. As for the second step, it aims at helping us understand better the nature of philosophy through the practice of philosophy with the help of core texts written by some of the most important thinkers of the discipline.

### Learning Objectives

- To show the importance and necessity of a philosophical reflection in one's personal life.
- To foster one's desire to engage in philosophy and rational thinking in general.
- To introduce the context in which philosophy was born.
- To give a good understanding of what philosophy implies and requires.
- To give an opportunity to get acquainted with particular philosophical questions.
- To strengthen one's capability of reading and thinking about philosophical problems by oneself.

## Course Content

### I. About philosophy as such: what is it?

- 1) An allegorical and analogical approach: slavery, light, and maturity
  - Plato, *Republic*, VII, 514a-516c ("Allegory of the Cave")
  - Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*
- 2) A more systematic approach
  - 2.1) Philosophy, simple ignorance, and the search for the fundamentals of things
    - Plato, *Laches*
  - 2.2) Philosophy as "love of wisdom"
    - Plato, *Protagoras* (various excerpts)
    - Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V, 3, 3
    - Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, XI
  - 2.3) Philosophy and rationality
    - Hesiod, *Theogony*, 535-612, and *Works and Days*, 42-105
    - Fragments from the Presocratics
    - Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief"
- 3) Understanding philosophy through
  - 3.1) a tentative definition of what it is
  - 3.2) a brief consideration of its division
  - 3.3) a brief consideration of what it is not :
    - 3.2.1) extreme skepticism and relativism
    - 3.2.2) literature, history, science, and religion
      - Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, 1451a35-b11
      - Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief"
      - J.-P. II, *Faith and Reason* (excerpts)

### II. Philosophy in action: a few philosophical problems and how some philosophers tackled them

- 1) What and how do we know? In particular, what is the basis of our knowledge?
  - René Descartes, *Meditations*, I-II
- 2) What are we? In particular, are we free beings?
  - Baron d'Holbach, *The System of Nature*, I, 11
  - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*
- 3) How should we live? In particular, in view of what general end or meaning ought we to organize our lives?
  - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1-5, 7-10, 13
- 4) Does God exist? In particular, can God exist if there is evil in the world?
  - David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 11
  - Gottfried W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, abridgment, obj.1-8

## Conclusion

## Methodology

The success of this course rests mainly on the student's personal work, whether it be at home or in the classroom. Students will be required to read and to reflect on their readings before and after coming into the classroom, which will allow us to have better and deeper discussions during lecture hours.

## Evaluation

The breakdown of the course evaluation is as follows:

1. Ten short quizzes (10 x 2% = 20%), lasting approximately 5 to 10 minutes each and written with no aid. **These quizzes will be given throughout the semester and without warning.** Their aim is to verify the students' completion (and, to some extent, comprehension) of the reading assigned at the end of the previous class. (N.B. There will actually be about 12 such quizzes. Only the best 10 results will be retained. **This also allows for any quiz missed due to illness or any other valid reason**, for which there will therefore be no make-up quizzes. Should a student miss more than 2 quizzes for a legitimate and documented reason, however, make-up quizzes will be arranged.)
2. A first test (20%), concerning the content covered since the beginning of the term and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. No aid. This test is scheduled for **Thursday October 3<sup>rd</sup>**.
3. A second test (20%), concerning the content covered after the first test and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. No aid. This test is scheduled for **Thursday October 31<sup>st</sup>**.
4. A final exam (40%), covering all of the course content and made up of a few short-essay questions. No aid. To be held **during the time reserved by the registrar of the university for final exams**.

## Mandatory Readings

Mandatory readings, which are indicated in the "course content" section, can be downloaded from LEARN. Students can then obtain the texts more easily and at no cost, and also print them themselves.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### **UW policy regarding illness and missed tests:**

[The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations](#) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "[University of Waterloo Verification of Illness](#)" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or on the link provided above. If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

**Professor's policy on late assignments/essays, make-up tests, and plagiarism:**

Handing in late assignments: unless arrangements are made with the professor beforehand or an official doctor's note is provided, 10% of the total will be deducted per day.

Make-up tests: there will be no make-up tests for quizzes, tests, and exams missed for non-valid and non-documented reasons. Travel, excessive workload, defective alarm clocks, minor colds, a late bus, etc., are not considered to be valid reasons.

Plagiarism: students who are caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the evaluation in question and may fail the course. (Plagiarism, according to Webster's: the use or close imitation of the language and/or thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work.)

**Academic Integrity:** To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

**Academic Integrity Office (UW)** : A resource for students and instructors.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

**Note for Students with Disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.