

PHIL 100J INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

COURSE OUTLINE

Semester: Spring 2021

Course weight: .5 (half a credit)

Type of contact hours: remote teaching, due to COVID (with up to 1 hour a week of **optional synchronous** “office” hour)

Schedule: Pre-recorded lectures are uploaded (sometimes) once or (usually) twice a week, on Tuesday and/or Friday at 9:00 am

Professor: Bruno Tremblay

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

Optional office hour, in the Bongo virtual classroom, through the LEARN site: Monday 10:00 - 11:00 am (on most Mondays: starting with Week 2 + no office hour on Weeks 3 and 13 because university is closed — see course schedule) (office hour will close after 30 minutes if no student is present)

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
- 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: philosophy and religion
 - 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) How should we live? In particular, in view of what general end or meaning ought we to organize our lives?
 - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I
- 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. Students will be required to read and to reflect on their readings before and after attending the pre-recorded lectures. This individual work will also allow those of us who are interested to have better and deeper discussions during the weekly optional synchronous office hour or Q&A period.

Evaluation

The breakdown of the course evaluation is as follows:

1. Ten short quizzes (10 x 2.5% = 25%), lasting approximately 10 minutes each and written with no aid. Their aim is to verify the students’ completion (and to some extent comprehension) of the reading assigned at the end of the previous class. Quizzes have to be written within a set 24-hour period, on LEARN. (N.B. There will actually be about 12 such quizzes, i.e. about one a week. However, only the best 10 results will be retained, at the end of the term. **This also allows for any quiz missed due to illness or any other valid reason.**)

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 (25%), 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 will last for 90 minutes and will have to be written on LEARN, at the one time of your choice within the three-day period of June 9th-11th.
3. A second test (25%), concerning the content covered after the first test and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. No aid. This test will last for 90 minutes and will have to be written on LEARN, at the one time of your choice within the three-day period of July 7th-9th.
4. A third test (25%), covering all of the course content and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. No aid. This test will last for 90 minutes and will have to be written on LEARN, at the one time of your choice within the three-day period of August 3rd-5th.

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.