



PHI 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Syllabus

Winter 2014
Winnipeg Campus

Instructor: Lowell Friesen
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1 Course Description

Philosophers tackle big questions. Can we trust our senses and cognitive faculties to tell us what reality is really like? Does God exist? Are we nothing more than our bodies, or are we souls that merely inhabit our bodies? Do we have free will? Is morality objective or subjective? Philosophers tackle these questions through the use of reason and careful argument. In this course we will take up some of these questions. We will look at how some philosophers answered them in the past and then we will compare their views with those of more recent philosophers. The focus will be on careful analysis and sound reasoning.

Duration: January 13 – April 17, 2014
Delivery Mode: Lectures, Printed Materials, and Online
Credits: 3 Credit Hours
Prerequisites: None

2 Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course you will (i) have a working knowledge of a few of the great works of philosophy and of some of the debates that these works have spawned. Because we will engage with these works and the questions they tackle in a careful and rigorous way, this course will (ii) put you in a better position to decide on the answers to these questions yourself and (iii) improve your

capacity to think clearly and carefully about other difficult and complicated issues. It will also (iv) improve your ability to present and defend your own ideas, an ability that will serve you well in whatever career you happen to find yourself in.

3 Course Materials

3.1 Course Textbooks

The following are *required* textbooks for this course.

- Descartes, René. 2006. *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*. Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN 0-87220-798-6. Edited and translated by Roger Ariew and Donald Cress.
- Hume, David. 1998. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. Hackett Publishing Company, second edition. ISBN 0-87220-402-2. Edited, with an introduction, by Richard H. Popkin.
- Plato. 2002. *Five Dialogues*. Hackett Publishing Company, second edition. ISBN 0-87220-634-3. Translated by G. M. A. Grube and revised by John M. Cooper.
- Shafer-Landau, Russ. 2004. *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?* Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-516873-9.

The following is an *optional* text.

- Russell, Bertrand. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN 0-87220-098-1.

Many of these texts are classics and so there are many different editions of them in print. If you are wondering about the suitability of an edition that is different from the ones listed above, please don't hesitate to ask me about it.

3.2 Reading List

Most of the following texts are included within the required and optional course textbooks. All readings aside from the required textbooks will be made available electronically via download from the course website or there will be a link to a suggested internet source. Most of the following works will not be read in their entirety.

- Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (The Five Ways).
- Behe, Michael J. 2001. "Molecular Machines: Experimental Support for the Design Inference." In Robert T. Pennock (ed.), *Intelligent Design Creationism and its Critics*, 241–256. The MIT Press.
- Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*.
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.
- Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.
- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

- Plato, *Apology*.
- Plato, *Crito*.
- Plato, *Euthyphro*.
- Plato, *Phaedo*.
- Plato, *Theaetetus*.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Shafer-Landau, Russ. 2004. *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?* Oxford University Press.
- Washburn, Phil. 2007. "Is the Mind Nothing But the Brain?" In *Philosophical Dilemmas: A Pro and Con Introduction to the Major Questions*, 320-331. Oxford University Press.

3.3 Course Website

This course's website is on BoothOnline. You can BoothOnline's log-in page here:

<http://boothonline.boothuc.ca/>

You can also browse to it by selecting **Current Students** on the college's homepage and then clicking on the link prominently displayed in the centre of the page. You will need to visit the website frequently. Homework assignments will be posted on the website and will not be distributed in class. The graded discussions for the course will also take place on the course website.

4 Course Outline and Important Dates

Although we will do our best to follow it, this schedule is tentative. If we fall behind, some topics may be omitted. Any changes to the schedule will be noted in class.

- All discussions that are due on dates marked with "*" are due at 4:00 PM on those dates. (See § 5.1 for more information.)
- All assignments that are due on dates marked with "°" are due at 4:00 PM on those dates. (See § 5.2 for more information.)

Week	Topic	Important Dates	
1	What is Philosophy?		
2	Socrates, Logic & Argument	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 01/23 Fri. 01/24
3	Logic & Argument cont'd	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 01/30 Fri. 01/31
4	Knowledge & Reality	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 02/06 Fri. 02/07

5	Knowledge & Reality cont'd	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 02/13 Fri. 02/14
6	READING WEEK (NO CLASSES)		
7	Soul & Mind	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 02/27 Fri. 02/28
8	Soul & Mind cont'd	Midterm Exam	Thur., 03/06
9	The Existence of God	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 03/13 Fri. 03/14
10	The Existence of God cont'd	VW Date *Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Mon., 03/17 Thur., 03/20 Fri. 03/21
11	The Existence of God cont'd, Morality	*Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Thur., 03/27 Fri. 03/28
12	Morality cont'd	Extension Request Date *Discussion Due °Assignment Due	Sun., 03/30 Thur., 04/03 Fri. 04/04
13	Morality cont'd		
14	Exam Week	Final Exam	TBA

5 Course Requirements

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Graded Component	Percentage of Course Grade
Graded Discussions	10%
Assignments	40%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

5.1 Graded Discussions

One of the best ways to come to grips with the material we will be covering in this course is to talk and write about it. You are encouraged to contribute to classroom discussions, but you will also be expected to participate in weekly online discussions (with the exception of the first and last weeks of the course and the week of the midterm exam). The online discussions will take place on BoothOnline and your participation in these online discussions will be graded. If necessary, the class will be split into groups of a more manageable size. You will be assigned a group randomly and BoothOnline will automatically direct you to your appropriate discussion group.

Your discussion contributions will be given a grade from 0 to 3, and in order to receive full credit for your weekly discussion you must (i) make at least the minimum contribution (as outlined below), (ii) engage the material and your peers in a thoughtful and productive way, and (iii) write in a professional and respectful manner.

All contributions to weekly discussions must be made by 4:00 PM, Thursday. See the schedule for more information.

1. *Minimum Contribution.* In order to receive full credit for your weekly discussion grade, you will need to post at least three times. One of your posts must begin a new discussion thread and you must post at least twice on threads begun by your classmates.
2. *Engagement.* Your posts need to demonstrate that you have taken the material and the thoughts of your classmates seriously. The material will often be difficult and obscure and you are more than welcome to post questions. However, simply posting “I don’t get it” doesn’t show that you have engaged. If you are puzzled by something, then explain what the source of your puzzlement is. If, instead, you want to express your agreement or disagreement, you should feel free to do so. But again, merely saying “I (dis)agree” will not be enough. Explain why you (dis)agree.
3. *Conduct.* You must treat the material and your classmates with respect. This does not mean that you must agree with every idea that is discussed in the course material or with everything your classmates say about it, but, when you express your disagreement, you must do so politely and with dignity. You are also expected to approach your communication in this electronic medium with the same level of professionalism that is expected in the workplace and in the public sphere. Internet slang and text-message abbreviations will not be tolerated. You must communicate using well-formed sentences that are free of spelling and grammatical errors, and your tone must reflect the fact that you are corresponding with people you may not yet have earned the right to be familiar with. This does not mean that you must approach the online discussions as you would a formal academic paper or a letter to a potential employer, but it does mean that you must approach it differently than you would a text-message exchange with a close friend or family member. If you struggle with grammar and spelling, I suggest you write up your discussion contributions in a word processor and use its spelling and grammar tools to check your comments before submitting them.

5.2 Assignments

There will be 9 assignments, one per week with the exception of the first and last weeks of the semester and the week of the midterm exam. The nature of the assignments will vary, but most will require you to do approximately 1–2 pages of writing.

All assignments will be distributed via BoothOnline and will be submitted via “assignment drop-boxes” on BoothOnline. They will always be due at 4:00 PM, Friday. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be completed on a word processor.¹ Instructions for completing the weekly assignments will be found on the assignments themselves. Grades on assignments will be determined by their content, but it is assumed that submitted assignments will demonstrate the same sort of professionalism that will be required in the online discussions. Assignments will be graded

¹If you do not have word-processing software, I recommend LibreOffice. LibreOffice is free and open-source and has nearly the same feature-set as its closed-source (and expensive) counterparts. You can download at <http://www.libreoffice.org/>.

on a scale of 0 to 10. Assignments that contain an unacceptable number of grammatical, spelling, or formatting errors or in which not enough attention was given to proof-reading will not be given a grade. You will then have one week to resubmit the assignment. If your assignment is then satisfactory, it will be graded and a 1-point penalty will be applied. If it is not satisfactory or if you fail to resubmit it, you will then receive a grade of 0 on the assignment.

All assignments must be submitted as PDFs. There are two reasons for this. First, submitting your assignments in this way will allow me to mark them up and return them to you in the same way that I would if you were to submit a hard copy to me. Word processors do not have mark-up functionality, but there are numerous PDF viewers that do. Second, files created on one word processor are often not rendered consistently on other word processors. Because your assignments will be evaluated, in part, by the extent to which you have followed formatting instructions and the conventions of academic writing, I want to know that what I see on my screen, when I open your assignment, is what you saw on your screen when you created and submitted it. Submitting your assignments as PDFs will solve this problem. If you do not know how to create a PDF or do not have the software to do so, please see the footnote at the bottom of this page.² If the requirement that you submit your assignments as PDFs is causing you trouble or anxiety please do not hesitate to contact me about it. I may be able help you out and address your concerns or, failing that, we can make alternate arrangements.

5.3 Exams

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The midterm exam will take place on Thursday, March 6th, during the regularly scheduled lecture. You will need to consult the final exam schedule when it is published to see when the final exam will occur. The final exam will be cumulative and will cover all of the material in the course.

5.4 Voluntary Withdrawal and Extension Dates

Voluntary Withdrawal Date: March 17, 2014
Last Day to Request Extensions: March 30, 2014

6 Grading System

Numerical Grade	Letter Grade
93–100	A+
85–92	A
78–84	B+
70–77	B
65–69	C+
60–64	C
50–59	D
≤49	F

²If you use a Mac (or a PC that runs Linux), you can create a PDF of your assignment by selecting the PDF option from the print dialogue box that appears when you tell your word processor to print a document. If you use a PC that runs Windows, there are several free software tools available that permit you to do the same thing. I suggest NitroReader. You can download it at <http://www.nitroreader.com/download>. Once installed, just select the Nitro printer from the print dialogue box that appears when you go to print a document from your word processor. LibreOffice, which is mentioned in footnote 1 and can be installed on Windows PCs, also has a built in PDF conversion tool.

Here is how Booth UC interprets letter grades and grade points:

- A+ (4.5) Exceptional performance with evidence of outstanding original thinking, superior organization, exceptional capacity to analyze and synthesize; a superior grasp of the subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of an extensive knowledge base. A final grade of A+ may be awarded only with the approval of the Academic Dean.
- A (4.0) Excellent performance with evidence of excellent original thinking, excellent organization, excellent ability to analyze and synthesize; an excellent grasp of the subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of an extensive knowledge base.
- B+ (3.5) Very good performance with evidence of original thinking, very good organization, demonstrated ability to analyze and synthesize; a very good grasp of the subject matter; evidence of good critical judgement, a very good understanding of the relevant issues under examination; very good familiarity with the relevant literature.
- B (3.0) Good performance with evidence of a good grasp of the subject matter; evidence of critical capacity, good analytical ability, a good understanding of the relevant issues under examination; evidence of good familiarity with the relevant literature.
- C+ (2.5) Satisfactory performance with evidence of a satisfactory grasp of the subject matter; evidence of critical capacity, demonstrated analytical ability, an understanding of the relevant issues under examination; evidence of familiarity with the relevant literature.
- C (2.0) Adequate performance with evidence of an adequate grasp of the subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity, an ability to develop solutions to simple problems found in the material; evidence of familiarity with some of the relevant literature.
- D (1.0) Marginal performance with evidence of marginal familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytical skills have been used.
- F (0) Inadequate performance with little evidence of even a superficial understanding of the subject matter; serious weaknesses in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature; failure to satisfy course requirements.

7 Policies

7.1 Late Assignments and Missed Tests

Barring exceptional circumstances, late assignments will not be accepted and missed exams will not be rescheduled. If you will be away on the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to ensure that your assignment is submitted on time. If you have a legitimate reason (e.g., family or medical emergency) to receive an extension on an assignment or have a test rescheduled, I will do my best to accommodate you. However, it is your responsibility to contact me well in advance or, in the case of an emergency, in a timely manner to make alternate arrangements. Decisions regarding extensions and rescheduled tests will be made on a case-by-case basis and you should not assume that I will agree with you regarding the accommodation-worthiness of your situation. I reserve the right to deny your request and to ask you for evidence (e.g., a doctor's note) of your need for accommodation.

7.2 Appeals

I will do my best to ensure that grades are assigned in a fair and equitable way. However, you should not hesitate to approach me about any questions or concerns you might have about any grade you receive on any assignment or exam. Although I cannot promise that we will ultimately

agree on the grade your assignment or exam should receive, I do promise to listen to your concerns and take them seriously. If, having discussed your concerns with me, you are still of the belief that your grade is unfair, you have the right to launch a formal appeal. Booth UC's policy on appeals can be found here:

<http://www.boothuc.ca/academics/policies/academic-appeals>

7.3 Academic Integrity

As a student, it is also your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Booth UC's policy regarding academic integrity.³

It is a serious offence to present a piece of work for course credit as ones own if the work or a portion thereof was done by some other person (plagiarism). Actions of plagiarism harm both the student and the reputation of the University College. Plagiarism or any form of cheating in examinations or term tests (e.g. crib notes) is subject to serious academic penalty that may include loss of part or all of the marks for an assignment/test, failure in the course, dismissal from the University College, or other serious consequences. Plagiarism or cheating in a course in which a student is cross-registered with the University of Manitoba may lead to disciplinary action by the University according to its policies.

To plagiarize is to take ideas or words of another person and pass them off as ones own. In short, it is stealing something intangible rather than an object. Obviously it is not necessary to state the source of well known or easily verifiable facts, but students are expected to acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions they use in their written work, whether quoted directly or paraphrased. This applies to diagrams, statistical tables and the like, as well as to written material and materials or information from Internet sources. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. It will also be considered plagiarism and/or cheating if a student submits an assignment in whole or in part by someone other than him/herself, or copies the answer or answers of another student in any test, examination, or take-home assignment.

At the beginning of their program of study, all students are required to complete the prescribed plagiarism tutorial.

Instructors are required to report all allegations of plagiarism or cheating to the Academic Dean before a grade is assigned. The original assignment is submitted to the Academic Dean.

The Academic Dean will chair a joint meeting of student and instructor to hear both the allegations and the students response to the allegations. The Academic Dean will then make a determination whether or not plagiarism or cheating has in fact occurred and decide on appropriate disciplinary measures. The student and instructor will be notified of the Academic Deans decision in writing. A copy of the decision will be sent to the Registrar and University College President. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the Academic Dean (see Academic Appeals).

If you have a question regarding academic integrity that isn't answered above, don't hesitate to direct it my way.

³The policy can also be found online at <http://www.boothuc.ca/academics/policies/academic-integrity>.

7.4 Policy on the Use of Personal Computers, Electronic Devices and Cell Phones in Booth Classrooms

We consider the Booth classroom environment to be a special place of focused engagement between professors and students. As such, electronic devices are allowed in the classroom only for the purposes of course instruction. The use of computers, the internet (including email), downloaded material, or other electronic devices such as cell phones require the express permission of the instructor. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, blogging and other related activities are not permitted in Booth classrooms. The use of personal computers and other electronic devices in the classroom is a privilege which may be withdrawn at the discretion of the instructor.

7.5 Policy on Unclaimed Term Work

It is the student's responsibility to claim all term work, assignments or tests. Any term work that has not been claimed by students will be held for a period of four months from the end of final exam period for the term in which the work was assigned. At the conclusion of this time, all unclaimed term work will be destroyed according to FIPPA guidelines.

7.6 Voluntary Withdrawal Date

Any student who is considering withdrawing from the course is requested to speak with the instructor and contact the Booth University College Registrar at 924-4861 and/or your program advisor.