

# Phil 110: Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2021

MWF 10:10-11:05am

Instructor: Nathaniel Greely Email: nategreely@icloud.com Office Hours: W 12-1pm Founders 166A

## Course Description:

This course is an introductory survey of topics in contemporary analytic philosophy. These include epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, reasoning, philosophy of science, and ethics. Philosophers ask and try to answer the most fundamental questions about the world. Some of the questions we will explore include: What can we know, and what does it mean to know something? Is your mind identical to your brain? Are you the same person you were ten years ago, and if so what makes that the case? What are laws of nature, and how do we come to know them? What should we do, both in a practical and a moral sense? The course is divided into seven two-week units. No previous knowledge of philosophy, logic, or science is required or assumed, though contributions from students with training in various disciplines is welcome.

## Learning Outcomes:

This course satisfies a core curriculum Philosophical Inquiry requirement. As such, students will:

1. Identify and define issues and problems of concern, analyzing them critically and systematically by asking relevant questions, examining different sides of an issue and evaluating arguments and, where appropriate, using the language and techniques of formal logic to articulate and assess argumentation. (*Analysis*)
2. Construct clear, rigorous arguments for well-delineated theses. (*Argumentation*)
3. *Central Problems of Philosophy*: Demonstrate awareness of the central areas of philosophical inquiry, including logic, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, or ethics and of the major questions explored in these fields.

PHIL 110 Learning outcomes:

1. Use the tools of philosophy (logic) to compose, analyze, and evaluate arguments
2. Describe and explain some of the answers philosophers throughout history have defended in reply to questions about justice, human nature, faith and reason, God's existence, knowledge and skepticism, and the mind and body
3. Articulate and defend your own answers to such questions in speech and writing

## Assessments:

The assessments in this course are largely designed to keep you engaged with the lectures, readings, and other students in the course. Your grades for discussion, quizzes, research proposal, and essay draft comprise 60% of your grade. It should be easy to do well on these components if you stay engaged. The midterm and final essay will be graded on quality - to get top marks on these components you will be required to demonstrate understanding of the material (for the midterm and final exam) and some original philosophical insight (for the final essay). Your final grade in the course will be composed of the following:

**Attendance – 15%**

Lecture attendance is required. In lecture I will not only present and explain the readings, but we will engage in active learning projects. Being in class is essential to these activities. Exceptions will only be made with a documented excuse, such as a doctor's note. You may miss up to three lectures without an excuse and still receive full marks for attendance.

#### **Quizzes – 15%**

At the end of each two-week unit, we will devote one class period to review, followed by a short quiz on that unit. The goal of the quizzes is to assess whether students are keeping up with reading and lectures. They are designed to be quite easy for students who do so.

#### **Midterm – 15%**

The midterm take place in class Oct. 12. It will consist of two short essays (1-2 pages each). Students will be provided four essay prompts ahead of time and may choose to write on any two of them. The essay prompts will be on topics from units 1-3. The short essays should demonstrate understanding of the claims and arguments from the readings and lectures on the given topic. The essay prompts will be provided Friday, Oct. 8 and students will have the weekend to craft a response to the two they choose. The midterm will be taken in class with no access to notes.

#### **Research Proposal – 10%**

Students will produce a one-page document that explains the thesis they plan to argue for in their essay and outlines the argumentative strategy they will employ. These may change over the course of composing the draft and revising it into a final paper. This assignment is designed to get you thinking about your essay early-on and receive feedback on how it may be improved. Students are free to choose any topic that interests them. Specific prompts will also be provided as models for the appropriate scope of the essay, and students may choose to write on those prompts if they wish. Prompts will be provided Oct. 11 after the midterm. Research proposals are due Oct. 22.

#### **Essay draft – 15%**

One of the most important parts of writing an essay is revision. Students will be required to turn in a rough draft of their essay, due Nov. 5. The essay should present and develop an original thesis on one of the topics of the course. Prompts will be provided, but students are welcome to develop their own essay topics. The essay should be narrowly focused on a very specific claim, likely a single premise in an argument presented in a lecture or reading. Provide an original argument for your view about that claim and consider objections to your argument. The essay should be 5 pages (1250 words), give or take a page. It should be easy to get full points for your draft so long as it reflects an honest effort to make a cogent argument.

#### **Final Essay – 15%**

Students will revise their essay, taking into account the comments they receive. You are almost certainly expected to make significant changes to your essay in order to get top marks. The final draft will be graded on quality, not merely on effort. The final essay will be due Dec. 6.

#### **Final Exam – 15%**

The final exam will be similar in format to the midterm exam. It will consist of three short essays (1-2 pages each). Students will be provided six essay prompts ahead of time and may choose to write on any two of them. The essay prompts will be on topics from units 4-7. The short essays should demonstrate understanding of the claims and arguments from the readings and lectures on the given topic. The essay

prompts will be provided Dec. 6. We will then devote two class sessions to review. The final exam takes place on Monday, Dec. 13 from 11am-1pm.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Unit 1: Intro to intro**

In this unit we will read some philosophical short fiction and prime our minds to begin thinking philosophically.

Sep. 1 – Intro; Terry Bisson – “They’re Made Out of Meat”

Sep. 3 – Ursula K. LeGuin – “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”; Lewis Carroll – “What the Tortoise said to Achilles”

Sep. 6 – Labor Day Holiday

Sep. 8 – Daniel Dennett – “Where am I?”; Jorge Luis Borges – “Tion, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”

Sep. 10 – Active review; Quiz

### **Unit 2: Epistemology**

This unit covers the topic of knowledge. We will discuss what constitutes knowledge, what sort of knowledge it is possible to attain, different types of knowledge, and forms of injustice related to knowledge.

Sep. 13 – Descartes – *Meditations* 1 and 2

Sep. 15 – Descartes – *Meditations* 3

Sep. 17 – Edmund Gettier – “Is Justified, True Belief Knowledge?”; G. E. Moore – “Proof of an External World”

Sep. 20 – Tamar Gendler – “Alief and Belief”

Sep. 22 – Rachel McKinnon – “Epistemic Injustice”

Sep. 24 – Active Review; Quiz

### **Unit 3: Mind**

This unit covers the nature of the human mind. Is the mind a brain, a soul, a function, or something else? We will then cover one influential naturalistic account of mental content.

Sep. 27 – Rene Descartes – *Meditations* 6; Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia - *Letters*

Sep. 29 – Paul Churchland – “Arguments against Dualism”

Oct. 1 – Class cancelled

Oct. 4 – Hilary Putnam – “The Nature of Mental States”

Oct. 6 – Fred Dretske – “If You Can’t Make One, You Don’t Know How It Works”

Oct. 8 – Active Review; Quiz

Oct. 11 – Midterm

#### **Unit 4: Metaphysics**

In this unit we will consider the nature of personal identity over time. Are you the same person you were ten years ago, yesterday, or even five minutes ago? If so, what is the basis of that identity?

Oct. 13 – John Locke – *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* II-27: Identity and Diversity

Oct. 15 – Derek Parfit – “Personal Identity”

Oct. 18 – David Hume – *A Treatise of Human Nature* I-4-5: Of Personal Identity; *Pancavaggi Sutta*: Five Brethren; *Chachakka Sutra*: The Six Sextets

Oct. 20 – Eric Olsen – “Argument for Animalism”

Oct. 22 – Active Review; Quiz; Research Proposals Due

#### **Unit 5: Reasoning**

Reasoning is an essential tool for making our way through the world. We make inferences and predictions on the basis of current perception, past knowledge, general principles, and probabilities. Good reasoning leads to good lives. But humans are often notoriously fallacious in their reasoning. This unit explores these fallacies and considers whether there are more reliable reasoning practices.

Oct. 25 – Worksheet on Fallacies

Oct. 27 – Bermudez - *Decision Theory and Rationality* Ch. 1

Oct. 29 - Bermudez cont.

Nov. 1 – Wason & Shapiro – “Natural and Contrived Experience in a Reasoning Problem”

Nov. 3 – Tversky & Kahneman – “Judgement under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases”

Nov. 5 – Active Review; Quiz; Paper Drafts Due

#### **Unit 6: Science**

This unit explores the foundations of scientific inference. How do we move from individual observations to laws of nature?

Nov. 8 – Staley – *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* Ch. 1; Hume – *Enquiry* Ch. 4

Nov. 10 – Staley Ch. 2; Popper – *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* Ch. 1

Nov. 12 – Staley Ch. 3; Duhem - “An Experiment in Physics Can Never Condemn an Isolated Hypothesis but Only a Whole Theoretical Group”

Nov. 15 – Hume – *Enquiry* Sect. 7; Swartz – “A Neo-Humean Perspective: Laws as Regularities”

Nov. 17 – Dretske – “Laws of Nature”

Nov. 19 – Active Review; Quiz

### **Unit 7: Ethics**

This unit explores some contemporary problems in applied ethics. Who is responsible for climate change and how should we address it? What is racism and how should it be remedied?

Nov. 22 – Sinnott-Armstrong – “It’s not *My* Fault: Global Warming and Individual Obligations”

Nov. 24, 26 – Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov. 29 – Banks – “Individual Responsibility for Climate Change”

Dec. 2 – Gardiner – “Is ‘Arming the Future’ with Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil?”

Dec. 3 – Lawrence Blum – “Racism: What it is and What it isn’t”

Dec. 6 – Tommie Shelby – “Racism, Moralism, and Social Criticism”; Final Papers Due

Dec. 8 – Review

Dec. 10 – Review

Dec 13 – Final Exam 11am-1pm

### **Diversity and Inclusion:**

Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders (and identities & expressions thereof), national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability - and other visible and non-visible differences are welcome in this course. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. We will be discussing controversial topics in this class and students may confront views that they find wrong or even reprehensible. Where possible I would like to confront those views with reasoned arguments. If you find that a particular reading or assignment is so emotionally charged that it interferes with your ability to complete it, send me an email and we’ll see if there is a solution that we can all be happy with.

### **Academic Accommodation:**

If you require any form of accommodation on the grounds of disability, please visit this link: <https://www.sandiego.edu/disability/services/academic-accommodations.php> well in advance so that you can submit the necessary documents.

Contact information is [disabilityservices@sandiego.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@sandiego.edu), Phone: 619-260-4655, Disability and Learning Difference Resource Center, Saints Tekakwitha & Serra Hall 300, University of San Diego, CA, 92110

### **Religious Accommodation:**

If you require any accommodation on religious grounds, please alert me in writing as soon as possible.

### **Academic Integrity:**

All instances of academic offences including plagiarism, cheating on exams, and multiple submission of work, will be handled in accordance with official USD policy, which can be found here: <https://catalogs.sandiego.edu/undergraduate/academic-regulations/integrity-scholarship/>. Please read the policy and ensure that you understand it.

### **Integrity Statement:**

"The University of San Diego is an academic institution, an instrument of learning. As such, the university is predicated on the principles of scholastic honesty. It is an academic community all of whose members are expected to abide by ethical standards both in their conduct and in their exercise of responsibility toward other members of the community. Academic dishonesty is an affront to the integrity of scholarship at USD and a threat to the quality of learning. To maintain its credibility and uphold its reputation, the university has procedures to deal with academic dishonesty which are uniform and which should be understood by all. Violations of academic integrity include:

1. unauthorized assistance on an examination;
2. falsification or invention of data;
3. unauthorized collaboration on an academic exercise;
4. plagiarism;
5. misappropriation of research materials;
6. any unauthorized access to an instructor's files or computer account; or
7. any other serious violation of academic integrity as established by the instructor.

An act of dishonesty can lead to penalties in a course such as: reduction of grade; withdrawal from the course; a requirement that all or part of a course be retaken; and a requirement that additional work be undertaken in connection with the course. Because of the seriousness of academic dishonesty, further penalties at the level of the university community may be applied; such penalties include but are not limited to probation, a letter of censure, suspension, or expulsion. Copies of the full policy on Academic Integrity are available at the offices of the Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, academic deans and in the USD Policies and Procedures Manual. Instructors also explain other specific expectations regarding academic integrity in their classes. In the event the Hearing Committee determines that expulsion or rescission of a degree is the appropriate sanction, or in the event of two dissenting votes on the Hearing Committee, the person who is adversely affected by the Hearing Committee's decision may appeal that decision to the Provost, who may finally determine the matter in the exercise of sound discretion." (Source: Academic Integrity Office, 2021)