

**PHIL 1000 016**  
**INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

Fall 2025

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Description

Philosophy is a kind of inquiry; it involves asking and attempting to analyze and answer some very basic questions concerning the nature of things. The practice of Western philosophy has historically been characterized by the method of rational inquiry it directs, first and foremost, toward the following basic questions: 1) Can we know things about ourselves, and about the world around us, with absolute certainty, and if so, then how? To put this question another way: what is *knowledge*? 2) What are we, and what is the precise nature of the world around us? To put this question another way: what is *reality*? 3) How *ought* people to live, or; what is the nature of the *good*, and of the *good life*? Using the tools of rational analysis in the pursuit of these questions, the philosophical inquiry characteristic of the West leads us, seemingly invariably, to issues as diverse as the nature of the universe, the distinction between mind and body, the existence of God, the status of art, of ethics and morality, of history and politics, and, perhaps most significantly, to the question of what it means to be a human being – the sort of being that wonders about "philosophical" questions, for example – and to be the particular human being that I am.

This particular course has two goals. The first is to introduce students to Western philosophy. We will proceed historically, carefully reading some of the classic, primary texts of the Western tradition, and trying to understand them both as exemplary of many of the concerns that characterize the tradition as a whole, and as part of an ongoing, historical development. We will begin with a series of texts that examine the values that are necessary to nurture a good life in a just society, and the nature, scope and limits of human knowledge and understanding. We will then proceed to a number of texts that examine the status of philosophy and philosophical inquiry as part of the historical development of the West, culminating in Friedrich Nietzsche's ruthless criticisms of philosophy; its methods, and its role in helping to provide the values that have molded Western society and culture. We will finish with a brief reading from one of great works of 'modern' literature, provoking questions concerning knowledge of self – of one's *identity* – and of the nature of *time* and *memory*.

The second goal of this course is to offer students the opportunity to develop skills of real practical value. You will be required to read and make sense of some very dense and complicated texts (many of which will appear stylistically archaic and unfamiliar, having been written centuries, or even millennia, ago) during the course of the semester. Being able to fully understand very complex positions, arguments, and points of view – especially unfamiliar ones that challenge the ordinary ways that you think about the world -- is an increasingly valuable skill, and like any other skill, it requires practice in order to master. Most importantly (i.e.: from the standpoint of your grade!) you will be required to write clear, coherent, accurate, precise, thorough and well organized analyses of the material that we will be looking at. Your mastery of this skill -- more difficult than it sounds! -- is what your grade will ultimately be based upon. Communicating clearly and

effectively (here, in written form), and understanding complex points of view that reflect complicated issues, are both crucial skills that will serve you well in almost any career you may be interested in pursuing, academic or otherwise. You'll be getting a lot of practice at them in this class.

### Catalog Course Description

Designed to investigate major philosophical ideas from the Pre-Socratic era to the present. Students should develop philosophical skills through supervised analysis of readings in epistemology (knowledge), metaphysics (reality), ethics (values), and social philosophy. Emphasizes the articulation, assessment, and discussion of fundamental religious, social, political issues through class discussions, lectures, media, and writing projects.

### Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop understanding of philosophical aims and methods.
2. Develop a deep appreciation for some representative philosophical issues that have and continue to confront human beings.
3. Become conversant in the language and terminology used by philosophers in discussing various problems, and appreciate the value of precision in thought and in use of language.
4. Develop a sophisticated understanding of various philosophers' positions on questions of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and social organization.
5. Cultivate reading, reasoning, and critical analysis skills through working directly with primary texts drawn from the history of philosophy to the present.
6. Develop speaking and writing skills with respect to philosophical issues through discussion oriented classes and a writing intensive curriculum.
7. Develop the habits of thinking, speaking, and writing with maximum clarity about complex issues.

### Requirements and Evaluation

- 1) Two short précis, worth a total of 20% of the final grade.
- 2) Mid-term examination worth 30% of the final grade. Students will write short papers (approx. 500-750 words each) on two topics. You will receive the topics in advance, but will be required to compose your papers in class.
- 3) Final paper worth 35% of the final grade. Students will write on a topic of their choice, selected from a list of suggested topics. The paper should be approx. 1500-2000 words long.
- 4) Final examination worth 15% of the final grade.

Students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity, as outlined in the UVU *Student Rights and Responsibilities Manual*:

"Each student is expected to maintain academic ethics and honesty in all its forms, including but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism as defined hereafter:

1. *Cheating* is the act of using or attempting to use or providing others with unauthorized information, materials or study aids in academic work. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, passing examination answers to or taking examinations for someone else, or preparing or copying other's academic work.
2. *Plagiarism* is the act of appropriating any other person's or group's ideas or work (written, computerized, artistic, etc.) or portions thereof and passing them off as the product of one's own work in any academic exercise or study."
3. *Fabrication* is the use of invented or falsified information, research or other findings."

Students who copy any amount of material without citation – **including through ChatGPT or other AI generators** – will be at the mercy of the instructor, and will be penalized up to receiving no credit for their assignment. If you do not write your responses yourself, but copy or cut and paste from some other source, you **must cite that source**, otherwise you are plagiarizing. The Fulton Library offers assistance for online students, including help with proper citation – scroll down at:

<https://www.uvu.edu/library/help/disted.html>

Please see the UVU Code of Student Conduct for further information:

<https://www.uvu.edu/catalog/current/policies-requirements/student-code-of-conduct.html>

## Grades

Grades and percentages are related as:

A (93-100), A- (90-92)  
B+ (87-89), B (83-87), B- (80-82)  
C & D as B  
F (0-59)

A range – Excellent. Strong evidence of original thinking; **superior** grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; good organization and focus; writing is uniformly clear and precise, and relevant to the topic; capacity to analyze and synthesize; evidence of extensive knowledge base of course literature.

B range – Good. Evidence of good grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; writing is largely clear, precise, and relevant, though may display some minor inadequacies and lapses in this regard; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with course literature.

C range – Adequate. Student is profiting from the course experience; basic understanding of the subject matter and ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material demonstrated; writing must be comprehensible but may frequently lack clarity and precision, clear organization, focus, etc.

D range – Marginal. Some evidence of familiarity with the subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.

F – Inadequate. Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of literature; writing entirely unclear or irrelevant to topic.

### Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance of this class is expected. It will be difficult to succeed in the class without attending. Further, those students who attend (let's say *almost*) every class, and participate in class discussion on a regular basis, and who may have a 'borderline' grade at the end, can very likely expect a boost in that grade up to a couple of percentage points (though this "boost" is **entirely** at my discretion). EG: If you missed only 2 classes all semester, and participated regularly, showing me that you were staying on top of the readings and making a real effort to understand them, and your final grade is 89%, you will no doubt receive an A- on your transcript. Student's who miss more than a handful of classes should not expect any leniency in grading – your 89.4% final grade will earn you a "B+".

### Required Texts:

Plato; *Republic* short passage from book III, books V, VI & VII, *Phaedo* (short passage)  
Descartes; *Meditations*  
Hume; *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections II-V  
Kant; *What is Enlightenment?*  
Nietzsche; *Twilight of the Idols*, passages  
Proust; "Overture" to the novel *Remembrance of Things Past*

The *Republic*, the *Meditations* and *Twilight of the Idols* will be available at the college online bookstore. All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

## Title IX Information

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has experienced or experiences harassment or sexual assault including, dating and domestic violence, stalking or sexual exploitation, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, BA-203, (801) 863-7999.

Please be aware that all faculty members and university employees are considered "Responsible Employees" and are required to report incidents of sexual misconduct and relationship violence and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality. Please know that you can seek confidential resources at UVU Student Health Services, SC-221, (801) 863-8876.

Please visit <https://www.uvu.edu/equityandtitleix/> for more information.

## Religious Accommodations

UVU values and acknowledges a wide range of faiths and religions as part of our student body, and as such provides accommodations for students. Religious belief includes the student's faith or conscience as well as the student's participation in an organized activity conducted under the auspices of the student's religious tradition or religious organization. The accommodations include reasonable student absences from scheduled examinations or academic requirements if they create an undue hardship for sincerely held religious beliefs. For this to occur, the student must provide a written notice to the instructor of the course for which the student seeks said accommodation prior to the event.

The UVU campus has a place for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of individual religious expression as is described at <https://www.uvu.edu/interfaith/reflection-center/>

## Accessibility Information:

Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, due to pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, may contact UVU Accessibility Services at [accessibilityservices@uvu.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@uvu.edu) or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at [DHHservices@uvu.edu](mailto:DHHservices@uvu.edu) DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

## Tentative Schedule:

Readings are for the week – dates indicate the Monday of the week.

### AUGUST:

20: Introduction.

25: Plato; *Apology*. **First précis assignment will be posted Wednesday August 27.**

### SEPTEMBER:

1: *Republic*, book 5. **Labor Day Holiday September 1<sup>st</sup>! First précis due Wednesday September 3rd.**

8: Plato; *Republic*, book 5 & 6.

15: Plato; *Republic*, book 6 & 7, *Phaedo* short passage.

22: Descartes; *Meditations* 1 & 2.

29: Descartes; *Meditations* 3 & 4. **Second précis assignment posted Wednesday October 1.**

### OCTOBER:

6: Descartes; *Meditations* 5-6. **Second précis due Monday October 6.**

13: Hume; *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, II-IV.

20: Hume; *Enquiry*, IV-V. **Mid-term examination on Wednesday October 22.**

27: Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” Nietzsche; *Twilight of the Idols*; “The Problem of Socrates.”

### NOVEMBER:

3: Nietzsche; *Twilight*, “Reason in Philosophy.”

10: Nietzsche; *Twilight*, “Morality as Anti-Nature,” “The Four Great Errors.”

17. Proust; “Overture” to *Remembrance of Things Past*

24: **Thanksgiving Holiday – woo hoo!!**

### DECEMBER:

1: **Final week. No readings – film week!**

8: **Final examination, and final papers due.**