- COURSE SYLLABUS -

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES, CULTURE, AND PHILOSOPHY
27899 - PHIL 1301 – 505
ONLINE
SPRING 2024

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“The unexamined life is not worth living.”
~ Socrates

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In addition to a concern with the goals, nature, and methods of philosophy, Introduction to Philosophy (PHI 1301) course focuses on issues concerning philosophical theories of knowledge and reality, drawing on ideas from a variety of disciplines. Possible topics: the nature of philosophy, the problem of skepticism and knowledge, mind and personal identity, and the nature and existence of God. Emphasis is on the nature of philosophy and its relation to education, logic, and critical thinking.

II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. Exemplary Educational Objectives:

- Awareness of the scope and variety of texts dealing with various philosophical issues.
- Understanding of the historical and social contexts of philosophical movements.
- Ability to respond critically to works in philosophy.
- Ability to formulate, express and support opinions on the philosophical issues covered in this course.
- Knowledge of cross-cultural influence of philosophy.

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”
~ Soren Kierkegaard
III. GENERAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM

General Education Core Curriculum

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives:

- Critical Thinking Skills
- Communication Skills
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills
- Teamwork
- Personal Responsibility
- and Social Responsibility.

SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

By enrolling in Introduction to Philosophy you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the critical thinking and personal responsibility requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>How the Core Objective Will be Addressed:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
<td>Sevenfold critical thinking combinationalism (e.g., logical; evidential; existential; pragmatic; viability, explanatory power) and five approaches in critical thinking (e.g., synthetic, analytic, lateral, existential, and prescriptive) employed in two essay exams.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Three out of fourteen online modules dedicated to critical thinking alone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chapters 3-12 from text <em>Thinking with Excellence</em> dedicated to this core requirement as well.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creative video project will involve critical thinking collaboratively between students and grading assessment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
<td>The core will be met by final essay examination.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two online modules are dedicated to ethics and moral reasoning, one to existentialism and freedom of choice, and two aesthetic modules are concerned about aesthetics and personal and social responsibility.</td>
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IV. REQUIRED & SUGGESTED BOOKS

The following books will stimulate our thoughts regarding ultimate questions like:

A. Where did we come from? (origin)
B. What are we? Who are we? (identity)
C. Why are we here? (meaning)
D. How should we then live? (morality)
E. What's gone wrong with the world? (evil)
F. What can be done to fix the problems of the world? (hope)

REQUIRED:

Paul R. Shockley & Raul F. Prezas, Thinking with Excellence: Navigating the College Journey & Beyond (New York: Two Creeks Publishing Group), 2019: ISBN-13: 978-0692194812; ISBN-10: 0692194819). Kindle version (e-version) and softcover is available at Amazon. Softcover is also available at Steen Library in Library Reserves. Be sure to research library reserves hours which may be different than the library hours itself. If you have Kindle Unlimited on Amazon, the book is already included. If you cannot afford this book, contact me privately.

Thinking with Excellence Print
Thinking with Excellence E-Version Kindle


The Philosophy Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained Printed Book
The Philosophy Book E-Version Kindle

If you choose Kindle electronic version for both the cost is around $19.00 (excluding tax).

SUGGESTED (NOT REQUIRED):


The Story of Philosophy Printed Book
The Story of Philosophy E-Version Kindle

A. All books are available on Amazon in print and in e-version. A free printed copy is available in library reserves. Also, Thinking with Excellence is free with Amazon Unlimited.

B. Will Durant's Story of Philosophy is also available in both audiobook format and Audio CD. Copies are available in Library Reserves.

"Happiness is the highest good." ~ Aristotle
Examinations & Grade Distribution:

I will be evaluating the material you have learned via essays, creative project with replies, and personal reflection journal. Each exam may have two to three essay questions.

- **Mid-Term Essay Exam (20%)**
- **Final Essay Exam (20)**
- **Creative Video Project (20%)**
- **Personal Reflection Journal, Part 1 (20%): Unit 1, steps 1-8**
- **Personal Reflection Journal, Part 2 (20%): Unit 1: steps 1-6**

For every assignment, SFA policy for academic integrity will be strictly followed. Please do not plagiarize, cheat, or use AI technology to complete any assignment whatsoever.

**Mid-Term Exam (20%): Due date TBD.**

The proctored online mid-term essay exam will involve one to three questions directly related to D2L content and required reading. This mid-term exam date for online proctored exam will be announced.

**Creative Presentation (20%): Presentation due by 22 March by 11:59 PM.**

You will do a creative, relevant, and substantive 9–13-minute video presentation from a topic of an approved list, directly related to what is studied in the course. Your video presentation will be uploaded to D2L discussion board using link from YouTube for students to engage you. Video presentation is due by 22 March by 11:59 PM.

The three replies will be due March 25 by 11:59 PM. Three student replies will be required by each student to receive full credit for your own presentation. Step-by step directions for these presentations and replies and will be provided on D2L discussion board following midterm. There is strength in diversity and community. No plagiarism whatsoever. No use of AI technology whatsoever. SFA policy will be enforced, and all bibliographical sources documented to receive full credit. But don't merely do minimal and expect an A; carefully understand the grading rubric (see end of syllabus for grading rubric).

**Personal Reflection Journal (40%):**

Composed of two parts, the personal reflection journal is worth 40% of your grade. After each section or "step" you study, you will write a full page (minimal, no maximum pages) using single-line spacing (not double) and skipping one line between paragraphs, answering questions derived from this list of 10 reflective questions. 12 size font New Times Roman; 1” margins; first-person. Cite any sources used according to the format you know the best, whether that is MLA, APA, or Turabian. If you cite sources, embed the sources used in the text or as a footnote or endnote. Bibliography or Works Cited page (if any sources are used) at the end of each journal submission.

Your journal will be divided into two parts, with part 1 being eight reflections from Unit 1 material (steps 1-8). This will count 20% of your grade. Part 1 will be due 1 March by 11:59 PM. Part 2, Unit 2 (steps 1-6) will be due by 1 May by 11:59 PM.
For Part 2, there will be six reflections, which will count as 20% of your grade, hence 40% of the total. You will upload each one to the appropriate Dropbox. Upload it as PDF or MS Word document. **Do not** use Google Docs.

You are to use the questions (your choice of which questions you want to answer) from this list to write your minimal one-page reflections:

1. What are the key ideas and arguments presented in this section, and why are they significant to know?
2. How do these ideas challenge or expand my current understanding of philosophy?
3. Did I encounter any concepts or perspectives that were particularly difficult to grasp? How might I further explore or clarify these concepts and perspectives?
4. Did the content resonate with any personal experiences or beliefs? If so, how and why?
5. How does the online philosophy connect with other subjects or fields of knowledge I am interested in?
6. In what ways did the content stimulate critical thinking and intellectual curiosity?
7. Do any ideas or arguments presented in the content have practical implications or applications in my life?
8. What are the potential limitations or critiques of the ideas presented in the content?
9. How can I incorporate the newfound knowledge or perspectives into my academic or personal pursuits?
10. What further questions or topics have emerged from my engagement with the online philosophy content? How can I continue exploring these areas of interest?

Only use these questions to write your reflections. No plagiarism; no use of AI whatsoever.

**Final Exam Essay Exam (20%): Due date TBD.**

A final proctored online exam essay exam will be given. One to three essays could be given. A good essay will be between 5-7 paragraphs. Thus, if two essays, then you will be writing somewhere between 10-14 paragraphs. If three essays, then you would then be looking at 15-21 paragraphs total. **No plagiarism whatsoever. No AI technology is to be used whatsoever. SFA policies will be fully enforced.** But don’t merely do minimal and expect an A; carefully understand the grading rubric (see end of syllabus for grading rubric.

**Any late work (mid-term; creative project; final exam; personal reflection journals) will be reduced grade level per day without official documentation.**

**Grading Rubric and Engagement of D2L Content in Real-Time:**

I will be using a grading rubric given at end of syllabus to evaluate all your work. This grading rubric is also available in Dropbox as well as in D2L course “overview.” Moreover, you must engage in the D2L content in real time as if one is an actual class. Average time spent on D2L content alone is now 15-18 hours over the course of the semester. A failure to engage in D2L content in real time, as if you are in an actual class, may reduce your final grade at least a grade level. In other words, do not tab through the material; the percentage completed must cohere with the time spent. Do not use mobile devices or Pulse App to go through the material on D2L. Instead, sign into D2L and do it from there.
Overall Class Averages:

If you earn an 89.5+ I will round you up to an A.
If you earn a 79.5+ I will round you up to a B.
If you earn a 69.5+ I will round you up to a C.
If you earn a 59.5+ it is what it is.

Late Work:

Your exam grade or creative project and replies may be reduced by grade level per day. Official documentation will be needed if essay exams are missed within 24 hours; an email or message alone is insufficient. All essay exam questions are posted around two weeks before they are due. Thus, plan for the unexpected and do not wait till the last moment to do the work. This late policy is taken very seriously. Do not wait till the last moment to do your assignments. Also, do not submit the wrong assignment to do D2L. If done, at least one grade level penalty may be generated.

“If nothing saves us from death, at least love should save us from life.” ~ Pablo Neruda

VI. CLASS ATTENDANCE & ONLINE ENGAGEMENT OF WEEKLY CONTENT (UNIT 1 & 2):

A. Completion of weekly content. D2L acutely observes the content you have watched, how long you have watched, etc. So, it will offer a percentage of how much you have completed. The percentage given by D2L must correspond with the time invested. Time invested in D2L instruction should be between 15-18 hours.

B. You must actively and qualitatively engage lecture material in an active way. If you simply tab through the material D2L with very little exposure will notify me. Consequently, you could receive a final grade level reduction if the D2L content is not engage in “real-time.”

C. It is critical you engage material at beginning of semester so that you will not be counted as non-attendance and dropped by registrar by 2nd class day which could impact financial aid, scholarships, full-time status, etc.

D. Unit 1 D2L Content is to be completed by mid-term exam due date and Unit 2 D2L content is to be completed by final exam.

“Every word has consequences. Every silence, too.”
- Jean-Paul Sartre
Do you struggle with remembering what you have studied? If given the opportunity, then please read Mortimer J. Adler’s *How to Read a Book*. His tactics were life changing for me. Also, consider the following tips developed from well-worn experience:

1. Maintain healthy balance between food, play, & sleep
2. Avoid high sugary snacks, drinks & processed foods
3. Don’t allow yourself to be distracted
4. Keep a clean conscience & forgive richly
5. Try to study when you think the best (e.g., morning for morning people)
6. Don't keep doing the same things and hoping for different results.
7. Help each other out; there is a certain strength found in community whereby we can share our strengths to sharpen each other

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VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

A. D2L Dropbox has all due dates for assignments. Go to “Course Tools” and Look under “Dropbox.” Therein you will find clear, step-by-step practical steps and tips to help you

B. All exam assignments will use an essay format (which is different from short answer and term paper).

D. Essay exams will primarily be drawn from lecture and reading of *Thinking with Excellence* (chapters 3-12) and *The Philosophy Book*.

E. **Attendance is expected.** A complete attendance report may be filed with the student’s dean and the registrar with the final course grade. *In fact, lack of required engagement online, whether excused or unexcused, means you will receive a final grade of “F” for this course.*

F. **Please do not neglect instructional content on D2L! In view of your interests, too much is at stake. Each unit builds upon one another.**

G. If assignments are altered in favor of exams, students are required to be present for announced exams. Any missed exam without a *cogent documented* excuse will be counted numerically as a zero (00). This is considerably lower than an average F.

H. Because of the nature of these exams and creative project over assigned readings and lecture material, it is in your *best* interest to engage weekly units and reading material, especially since the course is built around them.

I. There could also be additional required readings as deemed appropriate given the topics we are covering. Therefore, do not wait till the last moment to complete D2L content and assignments. The work you submit for evaluation will only be good as the level of engagement you give to it.

J. Take good notes, visit your professor, and engage each other.

K. A separate grading rubric will be provided for your AI dialogue assignment.
Since it is so likely that children will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage.” ~ C. S. Lewis

What is a great question?

Asking questions in class can be very intimidating. We are fearful of being embarrassed or rejected. We don’t want to appear “dumb.” We push back from the idea of being singled out by the professor whereby we are called upon repeatedly in class; we don’t like the spotlight. We don’t want to be known as the “teacher’s pet.”

The situation becomes even more difficult. We come across students who like to argue, who want to be the center of the class, or who redirect your questions in a way that benefits them. Out of arrogance, hubris (which means excessive pride), and control, they want to claim “superiority” over fellow classmates.

Sadly, we’ve met educators who don’t like to be asked questions. Some are hot-tempered, cynical, and not easy to talk to or even learn from, and deem themselves “god-like” given their background, degrees, and accomplishments. They make us feel irrelevant, uncomfortable, and worthless.

To be sure, many of us don’t even know where to begin when it comes to asking good questions. We’ve never been trained on the science and art of asking good questions. Yet, we want to learn. We want to contribute to class. We want to seize our studies!

“Do one thing every day that scares you.” ~ Eleanor Roosevelt

What are we to do?

While there are difficult classes, professors, and classmates, thinking with excellence invites you to ask good questions. Success in life demands good questioning. Most professors we encounter love questions and long for rich classroom dialogue. Outstanding professors, and there are many of them, will also protect you from students who seek to disrupt you, try to take advantage of the classroom setting by showing off, or attempt to “put you down.” They want you to learn and will do all they can to facilitate those opportunities. If you can learn how to ask good questions, then you will have a dynamic skill set that will last a lifetime, no matter your career, context, or relationships.

“Before you contradict an old man, my fair friend, you should endeavor to understand him.” - Jorge Santayana

We encourage you to think about books, conversations, truth-claims made, and worldviews like a detective by asking clarifying questions like “What do you mean by that?” and “How did you come to
that conclusion." But here are seven types of questions you should ask when it comes to truth-claims being made by authors, professors, and fellow students:

1. “When you make this truth-claim, are you saying _______?” Here you repeat your understanding of the truth-claim. This is an additional clarification question to the two mentioned above.

2. “When you make this truth-claim, would this be an example of what you are trying to say?” Here you give an example of the truth-claim made. This is an example question.

3. “If I understand you correctly, your understanding of this truth-claim is _________ [repeat interpretation]? Am I right?” I wonder if the claim could be interpreted this way [give alternative interpretation]?” These are interpretation questions.

4. “What are the implications of this truth-claim? ” Or would this be an implication of this truth-claim _________? You can think about the implications of the truth-claim in how it affects or impacts one’s life, community, context, faith, family, other ideas, history, policy, science, or other types of studies. These are implication questions.

5. “Can this truth-claim be true given what we know about _________ [common sense; empirical data; historical facts; philosophical truths; scientific evidence; other realms of studies such as sociology or other inquiries]?” Here we are examining the consistency of the truth-claim with what we already know is true and trustworthy. This is a consistency question.

6. “I agree/ disagree with you. Here’s why. I’ve had this experience [state experience; remember to summarize; don’t be too wordy].... What do you think about this experience?” This is an agreement/disagreement question rooted in personal experience.

7. “What other ways can we think about this truth-claim that may be foreign to our own particular shared assumptions?” “Would _______[e.g., different age; culture; gender; race; religion; time; place] interpret this truth-claim the same way?” Here we are using lateral type of questioning; we are attempting to think outside of the box.

These seven types of questions, namely, clarification, example, interpretation, implication, consistency, agreement/disagreement, and lateral questions, will benefit you in ways you can never imagine!

"The marvelous thing about a good question is that it shapes our identity as much by the asking as it does by the answering." ~ David Whyte
**VIII. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS, GUIDELINES, & PROCEDURES:**

**A. Follow the Five:**

1. Know that all university rules governing academic integrity will apply.
2. Online lectures may not be taped, recorded, or video transcribed unless for DS Compliance.
3. Respect your classmates and professor.
4. No use of profanity or disrespect.
5. Do not wait till the end of the semester to contact me if you need assistance; I am here for you want you to succeed.

**B. Academic Integrity (A-9.1):**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

“A little progress each day adds up to big results.”
~ Satya Nani

**Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by UT university policy for violations. It is student's responsibility to understand every level or category of academic integrity violations (4 levels), possible sanctions imposed for each level, and university policy processes involved. If any violation occurs, I am obligated by university policy to file a report with the Dean of Students; there is no other option for professor.  
[https://www.sfasu.edu/sco/about](https://www.sfasu.edu/sco/about)

“The key is to learn from failures, and then to keep going.”
~ Sir R. Fiennes

Academic integrity violations are categorized into four levels with appropriate sanction guidelines for each.

**Level One Violations**

- Reasonable to conclude that the student's behavior was a result of inexperience with academic integrity principles and policies (for example, a first-semester student).
- Violation was minor or occurred on an assignment that was worth a small portion of the student's course grade.  
[View examples of Level One violations and sanctions.](#)
Level Two Violations
- Actions are dishonest in character.
- Impact a more significant amount of the assignment or course grade.

View examples of Level Two violations and sanctions.

Level Three Violations
- Actions are more flagrantly dishonest in character.
- Impact a major or essential portion of the course work.
- Involves planning and deliberation.

View examples of Level Three violations and sanctions.

Level Four Violations
- Actions are flagrantly dishonest.
- Serious breaches of profession and personal integrity.

View examples of Level Four violations and sanctions.

“Always reach for the top for the bottom is way overcrowded.”
~ Carol, Cruise Director for NCL Pearl

C. Free Speech and Class Conduct:

To help improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will be engaging each other as a class. We need to recognize that while many of the students in the class may be on the same level in terms of age or year, there are different abilities in the classroom and different ways to look at issues of academic learning. In other words, one can always learn from his/her peers. For this to happen, we must respect one another. Therefore, while I will encourage students to share different opinions and will not stop individuals from disagreeing with one another, I will not allow any student to engage in any type of discrimination (e.g., age; body; gender; race; religion; sexuality; weight). Also, I will not allow any student to simply try to roll over or silence his/her peers. You are in a “safe zone” with me. In this class equality, diversity, and inclusivity are valued.

D. Acceptable Class Behavior:

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/student-code-of-conduct-10.4.pdf). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.

In the case of this course, disruptive behavior will include the following: consistent use of cell phones/texting during class, consistent participation inside discussions that are not part of classroom dialogue, referring to your teacher or peers in an inappropriate way, physically threatening your teacher or peers, and completing homework assignments for another class.
Students participating in such activities can be asked to leave the class and will be counted as absent.

E. Withheld Grades:

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.” For the complete policy, [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/5.5_course-grades.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/5.5_course-grades.pdf)

F. Students with Disabilities:

To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

G. Mental Health and Wellness:

SFA values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:

SFA Counseling Services: [www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices](http://www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices)
Health and Wellness Hub (corner of E. College and Raguet) 936.468.2401

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic [www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp) Human Services, Room 202 936.468.1041

Crisis Resources:

Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

H. Withheld Grades:

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the
coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F, and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average.

I. **Dropped from Class.**

Daily engagement is expected. If you do not engage in daily content, you will be dropped from the course when I am obligated to give record of attendance. Moreover, it is critical that you engage material daily. If not, then you will be counted as non-attending and will be dropped from class by registrar’s office.

J. **Caregivers Note:**

Parents and caregivers deserve access to education. Especially now, in our virtual learning space, with many children learning from home and schools and unexpected closures, I expect children to be present in class from time to time (Adapted from Heather Olson Beal)

Breastfeeding babies and children of all ages are welcome and may be visible on screen during class sessions. Alternatively, parents and caregivers may turn the camera off when more privacy is required.

Stepping away momentarily for childcare reasons is completely understandable and expected. Simply mute and/or turn off your camera as necessary and rejoin us when you are able.

Do not take any photos, audio, or video of any children on screen. Students who do so are subject to censure.

All students are encouraged to support and respect caregivers as they mute and/or turn off their video and use the chat function as needed.

Please consider disclosing your student-caregiver status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes, I am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-caregiver balance.

IX. **HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE:**

Carefully read assigned work. Proactively bombard your assigned readings with the following questions: why, where, what, when, who, and so what?

Consider making an outline of the major units of thought in your readings. As you formulate your outline from the reading, ask yourself the following question: “What do I see?” The more observations
you make, the better your interpretation of the author’s position or claim may be. Afterwards ask, "What does it mean?"

After you outline the author’s position/claim go back and see what arguments are being provided to support that position or claim. Keep asking yourself, “What is the issue?” Then consider what objections can be raised against that issue, position, or claim. Lastly, what replies can be given to defend the position or claim?

You should consult with me as often as possible to make sure you understand the material. Do not wait until the day before a test to begin studying. This is not the kind of course for which you can cram and expect to do well.

Consider forming study groups to prepare for exams.

Those who consistently and repeatedly engage the material in real time make higher grades than those who do not.

Make sure you can contact another student for lecture material in case you happen to miss a class (es).

Eight Strategies for First-Rate Studying:

- Read Thoughtfully
- Read Repeatedly
- Read Patiently
- Read Selectively
- Read Imaginatively
- Read Purposefully
- Read Acquisitively
- Read Telescopically

If you want to improve your reading comprehension skills, I encourage you to purchase Mortimer J. Adler's informative work, How to Read a Book.

Please regularly visit with me. Don’t ever hesitate to contact me; I want each of you to succeed with a passion for excellence!

10 MAXIMS FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE:

1. Be focused! Your energy, time, and discipline need to be bent on becoming the very best. Focus on what really counts. Do not allow yourself to become diverted by the trivial and unimportant.

2. Be holistic! Pro-actively make decisions and pursue interests in your daily life that will assist you in obtaining success. Your resources must always be redirected to your goal.
3. Be undivided! Do not separate one are of your life from another. Pursuing opposing interests may marginalize your success because it divides up your energy, time, resources, and attention.

4. Be determined! Academic progress is rough, ever so time-consuming, and ever so demanding. Meet every demand with a determination for excellence. Learn from your mistakes. Pick yourself up when you fail and press on!

5. Be resilient! Do not give up. You will perhaps fail some time or another during your program. You may even become depressed from the critical feedback you receive from your professors and peers. When those times come, and they do for most if not all, you must pick yourself up again-for accomplishing the goal is worth facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

6. Be sacrificial! Purposefully let go of those things that will hinder your success. Willfully discard every hindrance and degenerative influence that will keep you from achieving your goal with a passion for excellence. Routinely examine your life and see what is encouraging or discouraging you from reaching excellence.

7. Be healthy! Realize, as Aristotle states, that one area of your life impacts all other areas, whether intellectual, physical, or moral. Take very tender care of your mind, soul, and body. You need to strive to be holistically healthy-for if you are not mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy, then you may easily become fatigued, develop inner angst, regret, disappointment, and waiver in the completion of your goals. Remember, a good night sleep is one of the best things you can do for yourself.

8. Be supported! Cultivate a network of people who will exhort you to succeed! Develop relationships with peers who are also bent on achieving success.

9. Be excellent! Successful students realize the importance of cultivating a disposition, i.e., an inner character, which desires intellectual and moral excellence. Seek to desire excellence. Aristotle encourages us to do deeds of excellence until excellence becomes habitual in our personhood.

10. Be balanced! Learn how to balance “having fun” with “hard work.” Don’t ignore those opportunities to relax or play hard. In fact, pursue them! But do not allow those opportunities to displace your study opportunities. Remember, learning is pleasurable!

One of the dangers for those who do achieve success is the problem of malnourishment. Successful people may reach their long-term goals, but so many of them starve themselves in the process. Do not so focus on your goals that you miss out on dynamic opportunities that can nourish your person, inform your circumstance, grow your character, and enlarge your world. In other words, do not so focus on the future that you neglect the blessings that are right in front of you.

“Since we cannot know all that there is to be known about everything, we ought to know a little about everything.” ~ Blaise Pascal

THE PROBLEM OF PERFECTIONISM:

~“Perfectionism is self-destructive simply because there’s no such thing as perfect. Perfection is an unattainable goal.” ~ Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection
For some of us we feel like we are failures because we didn't achieve a perfect score, a perfect GPA, or are perfect ourselves. The problem of perfectionism is a painful vice, unattainable, and an empty promise.

**Here are 10 alternative goals you could consider instead:**

1. Bring yourself, exactly as you are, to everything you do as a philosopher. Start now as a student. No one will be able to be a philosopher the exact way that you are.

2. Ask questions when you don't know something. We all know you're here to learn and that the information is new, complex, and sometimes overwhelming. The best philosophers ask questions and never stop. Being open to feedback will be a key to success here.

3. Fully invest in being a lifelong learner. View this academic journey as the beginning of your learning journey. Things will change, new research will emerge, new policies will be adopted, you will move, meet new people, be presented you with new challenges, new settings, and new experiences. Your life structure will change – and you will be much better prepared to handle these things if you are a life-long learner.

4. Be okay with not knowing. Everybody feels this way about certain ways and at certain times. No one is immune. See #2 and #3 above for strategies to deal with this.

5. Adopt a philosophy akin to Maya Angelou’s “do the best you can. Then when you know better, do better”.

6. Anticipate, meet, and exceed the needs of others in your spheres of influence.

7. Accept that your best work won’t always result in the outcome that you're looking for. That doesn’t mean it wasn’t your best work and that doesn’t mean you should stop pushing to improve.

8. Work on becoming a really good listener; it pays dividends.


~ Adapted from **Brené Brown, The Gifts of Imperfection**

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**X. ONLINE EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION AND RULES:**

**A. Virtual Educational Instruction**

1. Though course is totally online, if zoom class is needed, please be present when zoom live stream begins according to email sent you and stay till lecture has ended. It
counts towards participation grade. Anticipate the zoom meeting; don't wait till the last moment to sign in.

2. Let professor know if you are having poor Internet connectivity.

3. Perhaps turning off the video feed will improve the stability of your connection if it weak.

4. YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO RECORD ZOOM SESSIONS OR TAKE PHOTOS DURING THEM.

5. You are not allowed to share passwords with people outside of this class. Protect passwords.

6. Zoom bombing or Zoom raiding will not be tolerated and I will comply with the university to the fullest extent in its investigation. University policies will strictly be followed.

7. Feel free to turn off camera if in need of restroom, drink, food, etc.

8. Feel free to close video feed for sake of privacy, we completely understand. But if given opportunity, it would be a joy to see eye contact made and be able to actively interact with you all.

9. Engage professor and others, ask questions, and allow this virtual teaching interaction be the best it can be. Be courteous, respectful, and caring.

10. No discrimination of any sort will be tolerated.

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" ~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

B. Instructional Strategies:

1. **Units and Steps**: In order to give you greater flexibility in your learning, I've incorporated a schedule that uses “Units” and “Steps” instead of “days” or “weeks.” Consequently, you can go about studying philosophy in a self-pace that better accommodates your demands, schedules, pressures, and responsibilities. In other words, I’m using steps instead of days in order that you might pace yourself given your varied circumstances. We all learn at different speeds, carry differing responsibilities, and find ourselves experiencing some cool, rad, and hip opportunities that we can’t pass up. Freedom and flexibility are designed in this course to better help you.

2. To be sure, for some of us, philosophy is not new. But for others, it is like a tidal wave and we have no idea what we signed up for, and why???? (lol; a little philosophical humor!). So, while I will be treating each day as a step, you can jump ahead or go at a slower pace. BUT, you will need to complete the first unit by mid-term exam and second unit by final exam.
3. Once again, it is critical that you qualitatively engage the course material for the first two days of class so you will not be dropped for non-attendance.

4. A word of caution. This course is designed in such a way that it builds upon one another. Moreover, it takes time and repeated exposure to the material to not only understand it, the ideas and even the people who advocated them and argued against others, but also because the ideas are so foreign to many of us in a "formal" educational way. I say "formal" because just about every idea we examine has been integrated into movies, TV series, songs, and visual images. We even see some of the ideas incorporated into the architecture, fashion, and furnishings that surround us. Moreover, you also have thought philosophically because each of you possesses certain philosophical assumptions by which you perceive everything else in your daily living. Like a pair of glasses, you see through those philosophical beliefs or "philosophical filters," and react or respond accordingly as you interact with others, labor, study, party, prepare for the future, and pursue or embrace what it means to have a "good life."

5. Please actively engage the content of this course. Ask questions, be willing to share experiences, and express concerns. Audiovisual stimuli and other electronic media will be utilized to foster knowledge acquisition of the study area. This course will employ aspects of distance learning technology, which may video presentations and correspondence online. For those specifically in online philosophy course, I will set up opportunities for Zoom gatherings to interact with me over topics, etc. Each gathering will be optional (unless otherwise noted) and specific meeting ID and password will be given in D2L announcements.

6. As an instructor, I have the utmost respect for my students and expect the same in return. I value an open-door policy. I will be available to discuss any issues/concerns via email, phone, and ZOOM. If you need help with subject material, please do not hesitate to contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss strategies to help you succeed in the course.

"We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience."
—John Dewey

XI. CLASS SCHEDULE, DAILY TOPICS, & ASSIGNED READING:
“Each of these philosophers has some lesson for us, if we approach him [philosophy] properly. ‘Do you know,’ asks Emerson, ‘the secret of the true scholar? In every man [person] there is something wherein I may learn of him [one]; and in that I am his [one’s] pupil.” ~ Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, xxix

A. Depending upon class context, I may alter our readings, topics, and classroom exams. Notwithstanding, follow this outline unless otherwise directed by professor. Sometimes I may ask you to re-read certain chapters or portions from a variety of articles.

D2L can assess whether you engage your online work. I will be monitoring your progress each week on Brightspace D2L. Thus, failure to qualitatively engage your weekly content, not meeting the objectives for each week could result in an overall grade level penalty. For not to engage the D2L content is like not attending class. Therefore, it behooves you to make sure you take the opportunity to engage the weekly material on D2L in real time.

B. 

Tutorials, topics, central questions, and reading assignments (The following tutorials will be paralleled to units on D2L):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutorials</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Central questions &amp; key themes in units 1 &amp; 2 content</th>
<th>Reading Assignment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Unit 1:** | Welcome to Philosophy | What is Philosophy? | Read “Overview” in Course Content  
Read Syllabus  
Engage in Unit 1 beginning with “Welcome to Philosophy from Doc Shock”  
Unit 1 online material  
Goal is to complete unit 1 steps 1-8 by 15 October.  
Follow online reading requirements. |
| **Unit 1:**  
**Step 1** | Welcome to Your Worldview | Know yourself | Unit 1 online material |
| **Unit 1:**  
**Step 2** | Metaphysics & Epistemology: Logical Reasoning, Plato, and Reality | Think Logically!  
What is real?  
What is true? | Unit 1 online material |
| **Unit 1:**  
**Step 3** | Pre-Socratic Philosophy, Socrates, Plato, & Aristotle | The origins of Greek Philosophy | Unit 1 online material |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Unit 1:</strong> Step 4</th>
<th>Post-Aristotelian &amp; Medieval Philosophy: Focus on St. Augustine &amp; St. Thomas Aquinas</th>
<th>The integration of Philosophy &amp; Theology</th>
<th>Unit online material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1:</strong> Step 5</td>
<td>Two areas of focus: We conclude our examination into Medieval philosophy by considering the Jewish philosophy of Maimonides New Topic: Rise of Modern Philosophy: Rene Descartes</td>
<td>“I Think, therefore I am.”</td>
<td>Unit 1 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1:</strong> Step 6</td>
<td>Modern Philosophy &amp; Epistemology</td>
<td>Modern Empiricism vs. Modern Rationalism</td>
<td>Unit 1 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 1:</strong> Step 7</td>
<td>Modern Philosophy Continues</td>
<td>Skepticism vs. Scottish Common Sense Realism</td>
<td>Unit 1 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIT 1:</strong> Step 8</td>
<td>American Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, &amp; Introduction to Ethics:</td>
<td>If something works, does it make it true?</td>
<td>Unit 1 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNIT 2:</strong></td>
<td>CONGRATULATIONS!!!!</td>
<td>Complete Unit 1 by 1 March.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2:</strong> Step 1</td>
<td>Introduction to Normative Ethics</td>
<td>Nicomachean Ethics</td>
<td>Unit 2 online material begins, steps 1-6, March 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2:</strong> Step 2</td>
<td>Ethics Continues</td>
<td>Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going?</td>
<td>Unit 2 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit 2:</strong> Step 3</td>
<td>Welcome to Existentialism!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Step 4</td>
<td>Introduction to Philosophy of Religion</td>
<td>The question of God</td>
<td>Unit 2 online material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Step 5</td>
<td>Two Major Topics:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophy of Religion continues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Philosophical Aesthetics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What is evil?</td>
<td>What counts as a miracle?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is beautiful?</td>
<td>Is beauty related to morality?</td>
<td>Unit 2 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Step 6</td>
<td>Philosophical Aesthetics?</td>
<td>What is art vs. non-art? If there is a difference, how?</td>
<td>Unit 2 online material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONGRATS!</td>
<td>You finished both Units!</td>
<td>#Golumbiajacks!</td>
<td>FINISH UNIT 2, steps 1-6 and “disembarkation” by 3 May 2024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“When you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”
~Friedrich Nietzsche

**XII. OTHER POLICY INFORMATION:**
A. **Attendance Policy**: Students should consider class attendance to be like attendance in a professional setting. It is mandatory. If, for some reason, you are unable to attend class by engaging material online, it is expected that you will notify the instructor **PRIOR TO THE MISSED** class session.

B. **Respect for Diversity**: We serve all diverse backgrounds and perspectives; Diversity is a resource, strength and benefit to us all. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with religious events, please let me know so that we can plans for you.

C. Topics, assignments, tests, reading materials, and office hours are subject to change per professor’s discretion.

D. PHIL: 153: Typically meets three times each week (Monday/Wednesday/Friday) in 50-minute segments for 16 weeks, and also meets for a 2.5-hour final examination. Students have significant weekly reading assignments, and typically complete multiple exams, a final exam, and epistemology essay and discussion work. These activities average a minimum of 6 hours of work per week to prepare outside of classroom hours. Online (and hybrid) version of Introduction to Philosophy contains extensive reading and written content which includes the same information students in a face-to-face lecture course receive. Students engage in online modules for at least six hours per week. Students typically complete 10 discussion posts, 3 essay examinations in addition to regular homework reading assignments. For every hour engaging with content, students spend at least two hours completing associated activities and assessments.

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” — Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

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**XIII. GRADING RUBRIC:**

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Here's the rubric I use to book reports, essays, analyses, creative projects, and research papers. A separate grading rubric is being designed for AI Assignment.

“Almost all our suffering is the product of our thoughts. We spend nearly every moment of our lives lost in thought, and hostage to the character of those thoughts. You can break this spell, but it takes training just like it takes training to defend yourself...” ~ Sam Harris

Here’s the rubric I use to critique your assignments (excluding mid-term if objective questions):

An excellent book report, essay, research paper, discussion post, or any other assignment (A) meets or exceeds all of these criteria for both content and writing:

Content
● Demonstrates originality of thought, creativity, and particular insight into the subject
● Demonstrates excellent and thorough understanding of the material
● Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates high level of intellectual engagement with the text
● Uses primary and secondary sources in such a way that demonstrates the ability to independently research, read, and assimilate material relevant to the topic and to include it in the paper in a useful and insightful way
● Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods with nuance and sensitivity, understanding how context affects interpretation.
● Logical fallacies are completely avoided.
● Truth claims are cogently justified (e.g., logical reasoning; empirical evidence)

Writing
● Includes excellent writing that is interesting to read, clear, correct, polished, varied, and appropriate to the nature of the audience and goal
● Demonstrates completely correct handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
● Is well organized, with a choice of writing and paragraph structure that guides readers through the work in a way that is well suited to the specific aims, audience, and tone of the goals of assignment.
● Is copy-edited and polished at the sentence level to within an inch of its life.

Excellent, thorough, appropriate integration of course lectures and required readings integrated into work. Use of quotes, paraphrases, and references used with full documented integrity.

A good paper (B) meets or exceeds all of these criteria for both content and writing:

Content
● Demonstrates a good understanding of the material
● Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates a high level of intellectual engagement with the text
● Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods, with an understanding of how context affects interpretation
● Logical fallacies are avoided.
● Truth claims are justified with good argumentation.

Writing
● Includes good-quality paper that is interesting to read, clear, correct, and appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s goal
● Demonstrates correct handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
● Is well organized at the outline and paragraph level
● Is carefully copy-edited and almost entirely error-free

Good and appropriate use of course lectures and required readings integrated into your work (footnotes; endnotes). Use of quotes, paraphrases, and references used with full integrity.

An average quality paper (C) meets all of these criteria for both content and writing:

Content
● Demonstrates solid understanding of the material; may sometimes not show full understanding of how sources relate to other material in the course
● Uses primary and secondary sources in a way that demonstrates intellectual engagement with the text at a level appropriate to undergraduate students
● May not demonstrate initiative in research; may sometimes show a superficial understanding of the texts
● Demonstrates the ability to read texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods with comprehension, but may have difficulty in not reading the text from an exclusively modern- or culture-specific position
● Logical fallacies are slightly evidenced.
● Truth claims are insufficiently justified (not argued very well)

Writing
● Includes average-quality writing that is correct and appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s audience and goal
● Demonstrates an average handling of the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material; may be awkward in integration and attribution of sources
● Somewhat organized at the outline and paragraph level; may be unfocused or somewhat not organized in the most effective order
● Is satisfactorily copy-edited, although some problems of language may remain.
Average use of quotes, paraphrases, and references used with full integrity. Average use and integration of course lectures and required readings in your work (footnotes; endnotes). Use of quotes, paraphrases, and references used with full integrity.

**An average (D or below):**

Includes any one of these problems to a noticeable extent:

**Content**
- Demonstrates a deficient understanding of the material
- Does not engage with primary and secondary sources, or does so in a superficial, proof-texting way
- Includes difficulty in comprehending or engaging with texts from different perspectives, traditions, cultures, and time periods
- Logical fallacies are discovered.
- Truth-claims are not justified or are poorly justified.

**Writing**
- Includes writing that is not appropriate to the nature of the assignment’s audience and goal (e.g., too casual, or too jargonistic)
- Includes persistent problems with the mechanics of citation, attribution, and integration of quoted and paraphrased material
- Lacks organization at the outline and paragraph level
- Includes persistent and/or systemic problems at the sentence level (structure of sentences; appropriate word choice; spelling and punctuation; other grammar issues; general clarity)

*Poor, anemic use and lack of consistent integration of course lectures and required readings in your work (footnotes; endnotes). Poor, fuzzy, minimal, or no use of quotes, paraphrases, and references used with full integrity. F for those not referencing material with full integrity.*