

## Syllabus for Philosophy 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Spring Session, 2016

### Course Description:

Philosophy attempts to answer “big questions” by using rational argumentation. This course introduces you to some of these big questions and to some of the tools philosophers have developed to answer these questions. Our study will cover four main philosophical topics: Philosophy of Religion, Freedom and Moral Responsibility, Epistemology (the study of knowledge and rational belief), and Ethics.

### Questions we will discuss include:

1. What is the purpose of philosophy?
2. What reasons are there for believing or disbelieving in God’s existence?
3. Are we free to act as we choose?
4. What is knowledge? What can we know?
5. What distinguishes reasonable from unreasonable belief?
6. Is morality real? Does it depend on our culture or our religion?
7. To whom (or to what) do we have moral obligations? And what are those obligations?

### Contact Information:

Instructor: Josh DiPaolo

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**Technical Support:** 24/7 UMass Online Help Desk and Technical Support

- Phone: 1-888-300-6407
- Email: [amherstsupport@umassonline.net](mailto:amherstsupport@umassonline.net)
- Click on “Live Text Support” on the login page to text chat with support staff

### In this class, students will:

- Think critically about foundational and contemporary ethical issues.
- Learn how philosophers approach philosophical issues.
- Learn how to analyze and evaluate arguments.
- Practice formalizing and evaluating arguments.
- Develop a disposition for finding the philosophical in the familiar.
- Develop a disposition for being a critical, reflective citizen.

### To help students achieve these goals, the instructor will:

- Explain course material clearly, in an interesting way.
- Design assignments that allow students to develop these skills and dispositions.
- Provide respectful, forward-looking feedback, in a timely manner.
- Adapt to students’ individual needs.

### Required Texts:

Feinberg, Joel & Shafer-Landau, Russ. *Reason & Responsibility 15th EDITION*

(ISBN: 978-1-133-60847-9)

Quine, W.V. & Ullian, J.S. *The Web of Belief, SECOND EDITION*

(ISBN: 0-07-553609-9)

### Course Assignments:

3 Discussion Pieces	12%
4 Reading Responses	16%
4 Exams	72%

## **Comments on these Assignments**

***Discussion Pieces:*** You will complete three discussion posts. The first is an introductory post. Directions for how to complete the introductory post will be available during preview week. The second and third fall into what I call the “Philosophy in Life” posts. See the *Guidelines for Philosophy in Life Posts* in the Introductory Material Folder.

***Reading Responses:*** For each unit, pick three of the assigned readings. For each of these readings, do three things: First, write a comprehension question on the reading—a question to which someone who fully understood the reading should know the answer. Second, write a critical thinking question—a question that asks someone to engage with one of the arguments of the reading. Third, answer each of these questions. These assignments will be due three days before the exams are due. They are meant to provide incentive to keep up with and engage with the readings. Submit them by emailing them to me by 11:59pm on their due date. Reading Responses can usually be completed in 2 (single-spaced, normal font, normal margins) pages. Reading responses longer than 4 pages will not be accepted.

***Exams:*** At the end of each unit, you will take an exam. Exams are **cumulative**. Although students tend to dislike cumulative exams, they actually **benefit** students and **promote learning**. Cumulative exams allow students (1) to learn from their mistakes, (2) to demonstrate improvement in understanding, and (3) to be rewarded for this improvement. Memorization is static and discrete; learning is dynamic and continuous. Cumulative exams assess and reward learning rather than mere memorization.

Completed exams must be submitted by 11:59pm on the due date. Submit them by emailing them to me as Word documents to the address specified above. (Please save the documents in the following format: for exam 1, save your file as: E1.lastname.doc or docx. For instance, if I were saving exam 2, I'd save it as: E2.DiPaolo.docx.)

## **Course Policies**

***Office Hours/Participation:*** Every Thursday, except on the week of an exam, I want you to email me answering two questions:

1. Are you understanding the material?
2. Do you think you're going to make it through the class?

Your email can be as simple as “Yes, Yes.” But if you would like help, be sure to use this as an opportunity to get it. This weekly email counts as both participation and as required office hours. The amount of emails you send can help your grade. (E.g., if you are on a grade cusp, and you never email me, I'll be less likely to bump you up.)

***Lectures:*** Each topic of the course will have corresponding lectures posted on the course website. See the schedule below. You should consult these lectures in addition to doing the assigned reading. Exams will be based on BOTH readings and lectures.

***Readings:*** The schedule below lists the readings for the relevant days of the course.

***Scheduling, Late, & Make-up Work:*** To help keep you on pace, I have scheduled the course as if it were on a Tuesday/Thursday schedule. Late work will be accepted only in rare circumstances, and I will have final say on this matter. If you know you will miss a deadline, please email me *before* missing the deadline. I will be much more likely to grant an extension in that case.

***Disabilities:*** Please let me know immediately if you have any disabilities that may affect your progress in this course. I will do my best to accommodate.

**Cheating:** DON'T CHEAT. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism and copying another student's exam. All of the relevant information for the course will be easily accessed on the course website or in the assigned readings. There will be absolutely no reason to cheat. If I find out that you've cheated in some way, you will fail the course and I will report you to the dean.

**Assignment Due Dates:**

<u>Unit 1</u>	<u>Unit 2</u>	<u>Unit 3</u>	<u>Unit 4</u>
1/26 Discussion 1	2/25 Reading Response 2	3/7 Discussion 2	4/20 Discussion 3
2/8 Reading Response 1	3/1 Exam 2	3/28 Reading Response 3	4/21 Reading Response 4
2/11 Exam 1		3/31 Exam 3	4/26 Exam 4

**Schedule:** The Reading List lists the assigned readings. Consult the Schedule below to find when the readings should be done. The Tuesday/Thursday cells below list a slide and an author (or authors). For that date, read the lecture slide and the work by the relevant authors. The Assignments cells reproduce the information just provided.

**Reading List**

Readings marked:

- “RR” can be found in *Reason & Responsibility*
- “WOB” can be found in *The Web of Belief*
- “CW” can be found in the Readings Folder on the Course Website

Unit 1

Russell, Bertrand “The Value of Philosophy” (RR)  
Anselm of Canterbury “The Ontological Argument, from *Proslogion*” (RR)  
Rowe, William “The Ontological Argument” (RR)  
Paley, William “The Argument from Design” (RR)  
Sober, Elliott “Creationism” (CW)  
Mackie, J. L. “Evil and Omnipotence” (RR)  
Lewis, David “Divine Evil” (CW)

Unit 2

van Inwagen, Peter “Freedom of the Will” (RR)  
Nagel, Thomas “Moral Luck” (RR)  
Frankfurt, Harry “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (RR)

Unit 3

Gettier, Edmund “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (RR)  
Cornman, James, Lehrer, Keith, & Pappas, George “An Analysis of Knowledge” (RR)  
Descartes, Rene “*Mediations on First Philosophy: Meditations 1 & 2*” (RR)  
Huemer, Michael “Three Skeptical Arguments” (RR)  
Quine, W.V. & Ullian, J.S. *The Web of Belief* (WOB)

Unit 4

Rachels, James “The Challenges of Cultural Relativism” (CW)  
Plato “Euthyphro” (RR)  
Shafer-Landau “Ten Arguments against Moral Objectivism” (CW)  
Singer, Peter “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (RR)  
Arthur, John “Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code” (CW)  
Sen, Amartya “Property and Hunger” (CW)  
Martin, Michael “A Critique of Moral Vegetarianism” (CW)  
Norcross, Alistair “Puppies, Pigs, and People” (CW)

<b>Week 1 (Unit 1)</b> Introductory Material	<b>Tuesday 1/19</b> <i>Slide 1</i> Russell	<b>Thursday 1/21</b> <i>Slide 2</i>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>Week 2 (Unit 1)</b> Arguments for the Existence of God	<b>Tuesday 1/26</b> <i>Slide 3</i> Anselm Rowe	<b>Thursday 1/28</b> <i>Slide 4</i> Paley	Discussion Post 1 due 1/26
<b>Week 3 (Unit 1)</b> Arguments for & against the Existence of God	<b>Tuesday 2/2</b> <i>Slide 4</i> Sober	<b>Thursday 2/4</b> <i>Slide 5</i> Mackie	
<b>Week 4 (Unit 1)</b> Arguments against the Existence of God	<b>Tuesday 2/9</b> <i>Slide 5</i> Lewis	<b>Thursday 2/11</b> No Reading	Reading Response 1 due 2/8 Exam 1 due 2/11
<b>Week 5 (Unit 2)</b> Freedom of the Will	<b>Tuesday 2/16</b> Monday Schedule: No Readings	<b>Thursday 2/18</b> <i>Slide 6</i> Van Inwagen	
<b>Week 6 (Unit 2)</b> Moral Responsibility	<b>Tuesday 2/23</b> <i>Slide 7</i> Nagel	<b>Thursday 2/25</b> <i>Slide 7</i> Frankfurt	Reading Response 2 due 2/25
<b>Week 7 (Unit 3)</b> Analysis of Knowledge	<b>Tuesday 3/1</b> No Reading	<b>Thursday 3/3</b> <i>Slide 8</i> Gettier Cornman et al.	Exam 2 due 3/1
<b>Week 8 (Unit 3)</b> Skepticism	<b>Tuesday 3/8</b> <i>Slide 9</i> Descartes, Meditations 1 & 2.	<b>Thursday 3/10</b> <i>Slide 9</i> Huemer	Discussion Post 2 due 3/7
<b>Week 9</b> Spring Break	<b>Tuesday 3/15</b> Spring Break	<b>Tuesday 3/17</b> Spring Break	Spring Break
<b>Week 10 (Unit 3)</b> Rational Belief	<b>Tuesday 3/22</b> <i>Slide 10</i> (WOB) Chs. 1-3	<b>Thursday 3/24</b> <i>Slide 11</i> (WOB) Chs. 4-6	
<b>Week 11 (Unit 3)</b> Rational Belief	<b>Tuesday 3/29</b> <i>Slide 12</i> (WOB) Chs. 7-9	<b>Thursday 3/31</b> No Reading	Reading Response 3 due 3/28 Exam 3 due 3/31
<b>Week 12 (Unit 4)</b> The Nature of Morality	<b>Tuesday 4/5</b> <i>Slide 13</i> Rachels	<b>Thursday 4/7</b> <i>Slide 14</i> Plato	
<b>Week 13 (Unit 4)</b> The Nature of Morality and Applied Ethics	<b>Tuesday 4/12</b> <i>Slide 14</i> Shafer-Landau	<b>Thursday 4/14</b> <i>Slide 15</i> Singer Arthur Sen	
<b>Week 14 (Unit 4)</b> Applied Ethics	<b>Tuesday 4/19</b> <i>Slide 15</i> Finish Singer, Arthur, & Sen	<b>Thursday 4/21</b> <i>Slide 16</i> Martin Norcross	Discussion Post 3 due 4/20 Reading Response 4 due 4/21
<b>Week 15 (Unit 4)</b>	<b>Tuesday 4/26</b> No Reading		Exam 4 due 4/26

*If I find that making changes to this schedule will foster students' learning, I will make them.*