

## PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Professor Josh DiPaolo

Office Hours: TTh 9:30-10:45/4-4:15 & By Appointment

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Class: TTh 1-2:15; 2:30-3:45 H521

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### Description

Philosophy is everywhere. It's in religion and in science. It's in your grocery store, your mail, and your schools. It's in your pocket (or wherever you keep your smart phone or laptop). In this course, we will learn what philosophy is, what its methods are, what some philosophical problems are, and what some prominent philosophers have had to say about them. Topics include: Social media, Skepticism, Echo Chambers, God's Existence, Religious Belief, Morality, and Racial Justice

### Truth-Seeking

Philosophy classes differ from other kinds of classes. You will be a truth-seeker in this class, not a mere information consumer. Rather than just learning what others have thought, you will try to answer course questions through rational means.

### Big Ideas

The course is organized around 5 big ideas I'd like you to take away from the class:

1. Even when your beliefs are mistaken, they seem correct. So, seeming correct isn't a perfect guide to believing truly.
2. To have reliably true beliefs, we need to reason well. And we can reason well (or poorly) about anything because philosophy is everywhere!
3. Reasoning well involves noticing what isn't there as much as what is.
4. To reason well, we need to do more than rely solely on culture (which can be mistaken) or religion (which requires interpretation). We need to begin with our most confident beliefs, testing them for plausibility and consistency.
5. Reasoning well requires realizing that how we should behave in an imperfect world can differ from how we should behave in a perfect world.

### Learning

In addition to learning those Big Ideas, in this course, you will:

1. Search for complexity and plausibility where you don't expect it.
2. Question arguments for conclusions with which you agree.
3. Develop a disposition for finding the philosophical in the familiar.
4. Uncover philosophical questions about your own discipline.
5. Experience the social side of philosophical inquiry.
6. Develop important intellectual virtues (e.g., humility and honesty).
7. Learn what philosophers have said about important philosophical problems.

### Texts

All readings will be freely available on Titanium. Please bring copies to class.

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## Grading Policy

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### Thoughts on Grades

Concern for grades usually interferes with learning. There's evidence that students who care primarily about learning – about raising questions, discovering answers, making connections, etc. – tend to do better in college than those who focus primarily on grades. There's also evidence that students who have control over their education tend to do better in college than those who don't. If I knew you would learn without the promise (or threat) of certain grades, I would give you all A's and we could dedicate our energy solely to learning philosophy without the distraction of grades. Unfortunately, if I were actually to give you all A's right from the start, many of you would learn little in this class.

**tl;dr:** My grading system is unusual because I care more about your learning than your grade.

Instead, I've created a more realistic, but unusual grading policy that has some of the benefits of the "everyone gets an A from the start" policy. The point of this

policy isn't to sort you into A, B, and C students. The point is to help you learn. It also gives you quite a bit of choice, as you'll see. **This is your education. You will get out of it what you put into it.** If you take the assignments seriously, you can learn a lot and you'll probably get an A. If you don't take them seriously, you might not learn much. It's up to you.

This policy will stress some of you out. It's different. But this difference is good. Don't just take my word for it. In past classes where I used this policy, when asked what I should NOT change about the class, *many* students – including students who initially disliked the policy – insisted that I should not change this grading system. Failing the class will be very difficult. Getting an A will be challenging, but doable if you focus on the learning. If you really feel uncomfortable with this system, feel free to discuss it with me or enroll in a different class.

**Note:** Titanium cannot incorporate this grading policy, so do not rely on it to determine your grade. Feel free to check with me in person at any time to confirm your standing in the course if you are unsure.

## Grade Policy

Your grade will depend on your scores on a set of “Core Assignments” and “Additional Assignments.” There are three scores: Incomplete, Pass, Exceptional.

### Core Assignments

- Exam 1
- Exam 2
- Philosophy in Life Post 1
- Philosophy in Life Post 2
- Philosophy of X Assignment
- Presentation Debate

### **Mario Bros. Grading**

Think of this system like a video game. Completing lower levels requires fewer, less challenging tasks; higher levels require more tasks and higher scores.

### **A-Grade**

You will receive an A (before “grade changers”) if you:

1. Pass all of the Core Assignments
2. Pass 2 Additional Assignments
3. Participate Regularly
4. Receive 4 “Exceptional Marks”

### **B-Grade**

You will receive a B (before “grade changers”) if you:

1. Pass all of the Core Assignments
2. Pass 1 Additional Assignment
3. Receive 3 “Exceptional Marks”

### **C-Grade**

You will receive a C (before “grade changers”) if you:

1. Only pass all of the Core Assignments

OR

### **C-Grade**

You will receive a C (before “grade changers”) if you:

1. Don't pass exactly one of the Core Assignments

*Example 1:* You do not meet the requirements for an A or a B, but you pass all of the Core Assignments. Then you would get a C.

*Example 2:* You do everything you need to do to get a B, except you do not pass Philosophy of Life Post 2 (a Core Assignment). Then you would get a C.

### **D-Grade**

You will receive a D (before “grade changers”) if you:

1. Don't pass exactly two of the Core Assignments.

**F-Grade**

You will receive an F if:

1. You don't pass three or more of the Core Assignments.

**Grade Changers**

There are 4 "grade changers."

- If you have 4 or more absences, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade.
- For every 2 late assignments, you will lose one Exceptional Mark.
- If you have 5 Exceptional Marks, you may change an "Incomplete" on an attempted assignment to a "Pass."
- If you fail 3 or more quiz pairs, your grade will be reduced by one letter grade.

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**General Education (GE) Requirements and Learning Goals**

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**GE Requirement**

This course meets the requirement for GE category C.2 Introduction to the Humanities.

**Grade**

A grade of C or higher is required to meet this GE requirement.

**GE Learning Goals**

In this course, you shall:

- a. Cultivate your intellectual reasoning skills, expand your capacity for creative imagination, develop your reasonable moral sensibilities, and increase your capacity for sensitive engagement through studying great works of human imagination and reason (which are to be primarily, though not exclusively, written texts and literature).
- b. Understand how the humanities have contributed to the development of culture, including the comparative study of the humanities in diverse cultures.
- c. Understand how the humanities have sought to provide answers to complex problems facing humanity, including the relationship of the self to culture and the natural world, the nature of moral and legal obligations, and the meaning and purpose of human existence.

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**Brief Assignment Descriptions**

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*\*More details can be found in the "Assignment Guide" on Titanium\**

**Attendance**

Attendance is required because you won't do well in the class if you don't attend. Please get two classmates' contact info to ask what you missed if you miss class.

**Exams**

You will take two exams. Exams test your understanding of course content, not your opinion. They assess your grasp of the readings and in-class discussions, provide you with more incentive to reflect on the material, and allow you to demonstrate what you've learned.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

**Reading Quiz Pairs**

7 quiz-pairs. Reading is required for this course. I will outline the important points from the readings in class, but to understand what's going on you'll need to do the assigned reading. To help you keep up, there will be 7 reading "quiz-pairs." This assignment will seem weird at first. By the end of the semester, you'll like it.

### Why so weird??

The first quiz gives you reason to read carefully before class. The second quiz reinforces your understanding after our class discussion. It also makes the first quiz, which is clearly the harder one, less weighty. This method of incentivizing and evaluating reading comprehension is more forgiving than more traditional reading quizzes.

Here's how it works: You will have to take each quiz twice: the first day the reading is assigned and the next day of class. (Hence, "quiz-pair.") There will be four or five questions on each quiz. And since you already know the questions that will be on the second quiz – they will be the exact same questions that were on the first– you can prepare the second time around to ensure that you get a perfect score.

*Example:* You get 3 out of 5 questions correct on Reading Quiz 1A, and 4 out of 5 correct on Reading Quiz 1B. Your quiz-pair score is: 7/10. You passed.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

### Participation

Participating in class benefits you and others. We learn while we attempt to express our thoughts. And since you have a unique perspective, everyone else in the class learns when you share that perspective. Here are some ways to participate:

1. Ask questions about the readings or lectures.
2. Answer questions when asked.
3. Contribute your perspective to a discussion.
4. Raise objections to arguments.
5. Mention a relevant life experience at an appropriate time.
6. Discuss course material with me outside of class.
7. Participate during small group activities.
8. Complete in-class writing assignments.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

### Phil Life Posts

To help you develop a habit of approaching life philosophically, you will complete two "philosophy in life" posts on Titanium. For these assignments, you will write about connections between your life and what you've learned or thought about in this course. You will also read and comment on your peers' posts.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

### Philosophy of X

Whatever your major, there are philosophical questions in your field. For this assignment, you will attempt to uncover some of those questions and informally report your findings back to the class.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

### Presentation Debates

During the last 5 classes of the semester, you will tackle several traditional ethical issues. You will be split into groups. Each group will read two or three assigned articles on a relevant ethical issue, and groups will teach the class the arguments for and against the relevant positions on their presentation date. Then they will briefly debate the issue between the groups. Finally, the discussion will open up to the rest of the class. Attendance is mandatory for all on these days.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement.*

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### Additional Assignments

\*To receive a grade of B or better in this class, you must Pass at least one Additional Assignment.\*

### Agree w/ Conclusion,

**Disagree w/ Argument** One lesson I want you to learn about logical reasoning is that there are bad arguments for true conclusions. This means even if we agree with an argument's conclusion, we must still scrutinize the argument. For this assignment, you will talk with likeminded people about a belief you share. You will ask these people why they think this belief is true. Once you hear an argument you disagree with,

you'll explain that argument in writing and explain why you think the argument is flawed even though you think the conclusion is true.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement and Writing Requirement.*

**What's Missing?**

There's usually another side to the story, a missing piece of evidence, or another consideration that makes a difference to the truth. This assignment asks you to look for those other sides, pieces of evidence, and considerations. Find something in the media, in class, in the course readings, that you think misses something. Explain the issue, explain what's missing, explain why it makes a difference.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement and Writing Requirement.*

**Belief Origins**

What is some philosophical, political, or moral belief you have that differs from your parents' or guardians'? What made you think differently? What is some philosophical belief you have that is the same as your parents'/guardians'? Do you believe it just because they raised you to believe it or for some other reason? For this assignment, you'll answer these questions in detail.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement and Writing Requirement.*

**Philosophy in Art**

Find a passage in a poem, novel, play, song, or some visual piece of art that relates to course material. Provide the passage, a link to the song, a picture of the visual art, etc., and explain how it relates to the course. (Submitting your own art as part of this assignment is welcome!)

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement and Writing Requirement.*

**Change of Mind**

During your time in this course, you may change your mind about some course-relevant issue. Explain the issue, describe your previous opinion and why you used to think that. Then explain what you now think and why your opinion changed. When appropriate, be sure to describe the argument, theory, or reading that caused you to change your mind.

*Satisfies a-c of GE requirement and Writing Requirement.*

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**Communication**

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**Office Hours**

I have office hours scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This means I will be available in my office to discuss course material (or other issues). If my scheduled office hours aren't convenient, feel free to try to schedule a different time to meet.

**Contact**

Outside of office hours, you can reach me at my email address. I will usually respond within 24 hours. Feel free to get back in touch if I don't. **If you have a question about the course, please check the syllabus first before emailing.**

**No Regrets**

*"I wish I had come to office hours all semester!"*

You can benefit from discussing course material outside of class. **True story:** One semester, a student of mine who never came to office hours earned one of the lowest grades on the midterm. Then he started regularly attending office hours. Right before the final, he said to me, "I wish I had come to office hours all semester." He ended up getting one of the highest grades on the final. Don't wait! The course material is difficult. Come discuss it with me.

**You**

I expect you to regularly check your email and Titanium for announcements.

**Accommodations**

I will do my very best to help students with disabilities, special needs, or learning challenges succeed in this course. Students with disabilities who need

accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact Disability Support Services. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities and conditions.

Phone: (657) 278-3112

Website: [www.fullerton.edu/dss](http://www.fullerton.edu/dss)

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### Electronics

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**Laptops** Permitted, but should only be used for classwork. If you're not using them for class purposes, you will distract yourself, your classmates, and me. Please don't do that.

**Phones** The only time your phone should be out in class is if you're consulting class readings, or if I give you a moment for a mental break. Every time I see someone on their phone when they shouldn't be, it distracts me. That means the education of everyone in the class is negatively affected. Please respect your peers' right to learn without distraction.

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### Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

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**Statement** Please only submit work that is your own. Doing otherwise is one of the worst mistakes you can make in your academic career. When students plagiarize in my classes, they receive a score of 0 points on the assignment and I refer them to the Dean of Students' office.

**Plagiarism** The university defines 'plagiarism' as "the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another writer" and instructs me to include the following info on my syllabus:

If plagiarism is found in your work, you will be subject to prosecution to the fullest extent of university code, which will result in a failure of the assignment and will probably result in your failure of the course. Confirmation of plagiarism precludes you from being eligible to repeat the course under the university's course repeat and grade forgiveness policy. For complete details regarding the university's policies about plagiarism and other forms of cheating, see

<http://www.fullerton.edu/integrity/student/AcademicIntegrityResources.asp>

[http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications\\_policies\\_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPS%20300.021.pdf](http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/ups/UPS%20300/UPS%20300.021.pdf)

#### **Emergencies**

To be prepared for classroom emergencies, please visit: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu>

## Tentative Schedule

Assignments are in <b>Bold</b> . Readings can be found on Titanium
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Week 1	1/21 Course Introduction 1/23 Course Introduction	No Reading Start Logic Lecture
<u>Big Ideas 1-2</u>		
Week 2	1/28 Social Media Filters 1/30 Echo Chambers in History	Logic Lecture, Sunstein The Daily Me ( <b>RQ1</b> ) Plato Allegory of the Cave, Descartes Meditations 1-2
Week 3	2/4 Truth & Intellectual Vice  2/6 Echo Chambers Again	Lackey Echo Chambers Aren't Problem Cassam Bad Thinkers Nguyen Escape the Echo Chamber ( <b>RQ2</b> )
<u>Big Idea 3</u>		
Week 4	2/11 Arguments for God 2/13 Arguments against God	Metcalf Design Arguments for the Existence of God Metcalf Problem of Evil ( <b>RQ3</b> ) Divine Hiddenness ( <b>RQ3</b> )
Week 5	2/18 Religious Belief/Review 2/20 Exam 1	Listen to Hi-Phi Nation Podcast (Before Class)
<u>Big Idea 4</u>		
Week 6	2/25 Morality & Culture 2/27 Morality & Religion	Rachels Challenge of Cultural Relativism ( <b>RQ4</b> ) Shafer-Landau Morality and Religion <b>AA Due: What's Missing 2/27 11:59pm</b>
Week 7	3/3 Moral Reasoning 3/5 Moral Reasoning	Berg Abortion and Miscarriage Norcross Puppies, Pigs, and People ( <b>RQ5</b> ) <b>AA Due: Belief Origins 3/5 11:59pm</b>
<u>Big Idea 5</u>		
Week 8	3/10 Doing our Fair Share 3/12 Doing our Fair Share	Singer Famine, Affluence, and Morality ( <b>RQ6</b> ) Le Guin, The Ones Who Walked Away From Omelas <b>Philosophy in Life Post 1 Due 3/12 11:59pm</b>
Week 9	3/17 Segregation  3/19 Segregation	Anderson Why Integration Remains an Imperative ( <b>RQ7</b> ) Willingham Does Family Wealth Affect Learning? ( <b>RQ7</b> ) No Reading <b>AA Due: Agree w Conclusion, Disagree w... 3/20 11:59pm</b>
Week 10	3/24 Philosophy of X Prep 3/26 Presentation Prep	
Week 11	SPRING BREAK	
Week 12	4/7 Philosophy of X Discussion 4/9 Presentation Prep	<b>Philosophy of X Post Due 4/5 11:59pm</b>
Week 13	4/14 Catch-Up/Review 4/16 Exam 2	
Week 14	4/21 Presentation Prep 4/23 Presentations	<b>AA Due: Philosophy in Art 4/21 11:59pm</b>
Week 15	4/28 Presentations 4/30 Presentations	<b>Philosophy in Life Post 2 Due 4/28 11:59pm</b> <b>AA Due: Change of Mind 4/30 11:59pm</b>
Week 16	5/5 Presentations 5/7 Presentations	