



PHIL*1000 Classic Thinkers

Fall 2020

Section(s): 01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 08, 2020

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

This course will deal with enduring philosophical questions through an exploration of primary texts in the history of philosophy. Topics covered may include the nature of knowledge and the different types of knowledge, the relationship between the mind and the body, and the nature of good and evil. Texts and topics will vary with the instructor; students are advised to consult the Philosophy department's website.

1.2 Course Description

An introduction to philosophy through readings from the great thinkers of the past. Its aim is to give students a sense that the major issues and questions within philosophy, although initially raised by the great historical figures, are in fact perennial and therefore still relevant to us today. We will accordingly examine a range of traditional topics, from a variety of historical periods, including the 20th century, associated with such branches of philosophy as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and political philosophy. Major historical or classical figures to be studied will include Aristotle, Descartes and Thomas Hobbes. More recent representatives will include Bertrand Russell and William James. Questions to be addressed will include: Am I free to choose between right and wrong, or are all of my actions determined by antecedent causes? Is it ever rational to believe in God? And can I be certain of anything? The course will be delivered asynchronously, meaning that there will be no real-time, virtual meetings; rather, content will be uploaded to Courselink, where students will be able to access it at their own convenience, and discussions will take place via the Courselink "Discussion" tool.

1.3 Timetable

Timetable is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

1.4 Final Exam

Exam time and location is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor: Peter Eardley (PhD)
Email: peardley@uoguelph.ca
Telephone: +1-519-824-4120 x53211
Office: MCKN 333
Office Hours: N/A

2.2 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant: Rod MacNeill (M.A.)
Email: rmacne02@uoguelph.ca
 TA for sections 1 and 2

Teaching Assistant: Ryan Seguin (M.A.)
Email: rsegui01@uoguelph.ca
 TA for Sections 3 and 4

Teaching Assistant: Andrew Freundlich (M.A.)
Email: afreundl@uoguelph.ca
 TA for sections 5 and 6

2.3 A Note on the Teaching Assistants for the Course

The Teaching Assistants for the course, as noted above, are Mr. Rod MacNeill, Mr. Ryan Seguin and Mr. Andrew Freundlich. All three are graduate students in the Philosophy Department at Guelph, who specialize in the history of philosophy, and who are hired by the University as teaching assistants for their expertise. Ordinarily, you would get to know them in your weekly face-to-face seminars. This year, due to Covid-19, you will get to know them virtually, primarily through the CourseLink "Discussion" Forum, which they will monitor and to which they will contribute. They will also be available via email.

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resources

Textbook (Other)

Please Note: There is no textbook for this course. Rather, the relevant content will be

uploaded to Courselink.

* Under the 'Content' heading you will notice 4 modules in the Table of Contents section:

1. **The Primary Readings:** refer to the original source texts of the main figures we will be reading (e.g., Aristotle, Descartes, Hobbes, Russell, etc.)
2. **The Slides:** refer to my notes on the primary readings.
3. **The Secondary Sources:** are links to videos and secondary readings that will be useful, like the slides, in illuminating the primary readings, which can be challenging.
4. **Tips for Writing a Philosophy Paper:** is self-explanatory. Students should read this short paper before writing their brief, weekly papers, and use it as a helpful guide.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. By the end of this course, you should be able to:
 1. *Analyze and evaluate* major historical and/or conceptual developments in philosophy.
 2. *Identify and critically evaluate* the practical significance of major developments in moral philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind and political philosophy.
 3. *Read and comprehend* complex original source materials in the history and problems of philosophy.
 4. *Write* clearly and cogently on advanced problems in philosophy.
 5. *Be skilled* in the use of key tools for sound justification and rational persuasion, including formal and informal logic, the gathering of empirical evidence, and the balanced judgment of conflicting interpretations.

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Lecture

Thu, Sep 10

Topics:

“What is Philosophy?”

- No discussion groups yet and no papers are due this first week of the semester. Instead, your task is to read “What is Philosophy?” and go through the syllabus carefully..

Mon, Sep 14

Topics:

Week 2: Bertrand Russell: “The Value of Philosophy”

- **Question:** Evaluate Russell’s argument that the person who has no philosophical training is essentially a prisoner of his or her (irrational) prejudices that are “derived from the habitual beliefs of his age or nation.” But is it even possible to transcend such beliefs and, if not, is that so bad?

Mon, Sep 21

Topics:

Week 3: Walter Stace: “Compatibilism, or Soft Determinism”

- **Question:** Has Stace successfully reconciled free will with determinism? Does his analysis or ordinary language settle the matter? Why or why not?

Mon, Sep 28

Topics:

Week 4: Aristotle: “Voluntary Action”

- **Question:** Aristotle holds that as long as our bad actions are rooted in our beliefs and desires then they are in our control and we are therefore morally responsible for them. But are our beliefs and desires ultimately in our control and, if not, what are we to make of Aristotle’s theory?

Mon, Oct 5

Topics:

Week 5: Immanuel Kant: "The Right to Punish: Retributivism"

- **Question:** Does Kant's version of retributivism seem too harsh? Does it lack a notion of mercy?

Mon, Oct 12

Topics:

Week 6: Thanksgiving Break: No reading for this week

- **Mid-term TAKE-HOME Assignment** The Question for this assignment will be distributed the morning of **Wednesday, October 14th** and is to be returned, via Courselink Dropbox, on **Friday, October 16th by 5 PM.** In 900 words, or roughly 3 pages, you will be asked to compare and contrast a reading you have already studied with a related reading that you have not.

Mon, Oct 19

Topics:

Week 7: Descartes: "Meditations 1 and 2"

- **Question:** Are you convinced by Descartes' argument in *Meditations* 1 and 2? Answer specifically whether you think that the self the most certain of objects

Mon, Oct 26

Topics:

Week 8: William James: "The Will to Believe"

- **Question:** Explain what James means by a "genuine" option. Is he correct in calling religious belief a genuine option? Why or why not?

Mon, Nov 2

Topics:

Week 9: Descartes' Dualism: "Meditation 6: The Real Distinction between Mind and Body"

- **Question:** Is Descartes' conception of the mind's relationship to the body convincing? Why or why not.

Mon, Nov 9

Topics:

Week 10: Aristotle: "Virtues"

- **Question:** Is Aristotle's conception of happiness subjective or objective, that is, is it fundamentally in the eye of the beholder (subjective), so that you are happy if you feel yourself happy, or is it defined by a state of being and having certain characteristics (i.e., objective) regardless of how you feel? Could a criminal, for example, be happy in Aristotle's sense?

Week 11

Topics:

Week 11: Louis Pojman: "Ethical Relativism v. Ethical Objectivism"

- **Question:** "Does Pojman make a convincing case for ethical objectivism? Why or why not?"

Mon, Nov 23

Topics:

Week 12: Thomas Hobbes: "The Social Contract"

- **Question:** Is Hobbes' view of human nature convincing? Are people entirely self-interested egoists?

Mon, Nov 30

Topics:

This final week of classes will function as a review session. There will be no new readings to cover. Rather, students will use their discussion time to post any questions they might have about the content of the course in preparation for the final exam

6 Assessments

6.1 Assessment Details

Weekly papers = (10 papers x 3%) (30%)

In general, students will be graded on 3 criteria:

1. **Quality of Expression:** Because our writing is a reflection of our thinking, unclear writing is usually a sign of confused thinking. It is especially important, then, when expressing ourselves in writing, that we do so as clearly, precisely and as grammatically correct as possible.
 2. **Quality of Comprehension:** Because you are being asked for your views on a specific text for the week, it is obviously important that you demonstrate an adequate grasp of the material. You should therefore read the primary text (Descartes, Aristotle, etc.) for the week carefully—and several times if necessary—in order to gain a solid grasp of the material. My notes and the secondary sources (i.e., videos and readings) will also be helpful. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online through the U of G library) are also helpful and reliable resources on the web.
 3. **Quality of Analysis:** A good argument is one that includes a fair bit of analysis, defined by Robert Audi in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* as “the process of breaking up a concept, proposition, linguistic complex, or fact into its simple or ultimate constituents.” Once this is done, we then go on to examine these component parts for their implications and their soundness.
- Students are also encouraged to consult Peter Horban’s “Writing a Philosophy Paper” in the content section of Courselink.

How to interpret your grades for the weekly-papers:

1. **3 points:** The paper is well-written, grammatically correct and demonstrates that the student has a good grasp of the material and has put effort into reflecting on the relevant question.
2. **2 points:** The paper is, overall, good, but there was too much paraphrasing, or else there were some spelling or grammatical issues, etc.
3. **1 point:** some effort put into the paper, but the content is only tangentially related to

the reading or has significant spelling and grammar issues, etc.

Participation in Discussions on Courselink (10%)

This grade will be calculated and assigned at the end of the term by the TAs, and will be based on his overall impression of the quality and quantity of each student's engagement in the course, as measured by his or her contributions to discussion.

Please Note: Your "Seminar" does **not**, during this period of remote learning, refer to any physical, face-to-face discussion groups, **nor** to any synchronous arrangement (e.g., real-time Zoom meetings). Rather, it refers to your weekly participation on the Courselink "Discussion" board. Which discussion board you participate in depends on which **section** of the course you are enrolled in. So, for example, if you are enrolled in Section 1, you will participate in the discussion group associated with that section, which will be monitored by your TA, in this case, Rod MacNeill. On the other hand, if you are enrolled in Section 3, say, you will participate in the discussion group associated with that section, which will be monitored by Ryan Seguin.

How to go about participating in the discussion group:

Each week a question will be posted on the discussion board that is related to the reading for the week. So, for example, in Week 7 (as you can see from the schedule found under the heading of **5. Activities**) students will be reading portions of Descartes's *Meditations*. Once you have read the material and consulted my slides and the secondary sources, you should log on to the Discussion board for that week. There you will find a question related to the primary reading. In the case of Week 7, the question will be "Are you convinced by Descartes's argument? Is the self the most certain of objects? Explain your answer." Note that this question will serve both as the topic for discussion, and for the 300-word reflective/analytical paper you will write and submit via Dropbox on the Friday of that week. Note that you will be able to contribute to the discussions for each week starting on the Monday of that week. The goal is to have students contributing their thoughts to the discussion-thread throughout the week so as to bounce ideas off of one another. (The TAs and I will monitor these discussion groups, only intervening when a discussion seems to be going in a direction that could be seriously misleading with respect to content. Otherwise, students are encouraged to explore their reasoned opinions with the widest possible freedom as a method of gaining a deeper insight into the material.) By the Thursday of that week (if not before), students should be in a better position to answer the question for the week in their 300-word papers. To reiterate, these short papers are to be submitted each Friday by 5 PM, via Dropbox. **(please make sure to read the University's policy on online behavior under the 'Statements' heading).**

Take-Home Assignment (25%)

The Question for this assignment will be distributed the morning of **Wednesday, October 14th** and is to be returned, via Courselink Dropbox, on **Friday, October 16th by 5 PM**. In 900 words, or roughly 3 pages, you will be asked to compare and contrast a reading you have already studied with a related reading that you have not.

Final Exam (35%)

This will take the form of 2 long-answer, non-comparative questions on readings from the course.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Policy on the Use of Electronic Devices

Please note that the use of Laptop computers and other electronic devices is NOT permitted during the lectures.

7.2 Policy on Online Behaviour

- Inappropriate online behaviour will not be tolerated. Examples of inappropriate online behaviour include:
- Posting inflammatory messages about your instructor or fellow students
- Using obscene or offensive language online
- Copying or presenting someone else's work as your own
- Adapting information from the Internet without using proper citations or references
- Buying or selling term papers or assignments
- Posting or selling course materials to course notes websites
- Having someone else complete your quiz or completing a quiz for/with another student
- Stating false claims about lost quiz answers or other assignment submissions
- Threatening or harassing a student or instructor online
- Discriminating against fellow students, instructors and/or TAs
- Using the course website to promote profit-driven products or services
- Sharing your user name and password

8 University Statements

8.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

8.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

8.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

8.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared

responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance and not later than the 40th Class Day.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website
<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

8.6 Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that encourages academic integrity. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work - including lectures - cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

8.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>

8.9 Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

8.10 Illness

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.
