



Course Syllabus: **Introduction to Philosophy**
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
PHIL-1033
Fall 2023

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Tyler M. Williams

Office: 236 Bea Wood Hall

Office hours: Mon. 3:30-4:30 p.m.; Tues/Thurs 8:30-9:30 a.m., 11-12; and by appointment

Office phone: (940) 397-4125

E-mail: tyler.williams@msutexas.edu

Instructor Response Policy

Emails sent during the week will receive a reply within 24 hours. Response time over the weekends and holidays will likely take longer. If you have not received a reply to an email within 48 hours, please feel free to send a follow up. Before sending an email regarding a question about our course, check to see if this syllabus answers your question. All emails should observe basic email etiquette: a greeting at the beginning, a statement of the purpose of your email, a tone of cordiality, and a signature at the end.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

All course texts will be provided electronically in PDF format via our course's D2L page. Students are expected to download, print, and bring each reading to each class devoted to that reading. Additionally, all students are expected to complete the assigned reading *prior* to attending each class session.

Course Catalogue Description

A historical and theoretical introduction to major issues in Western philosophy. Questions to be explored include, but are not limited to, "what is being?", "does God exist?", "what is truth?", "are we free?", and "how ought we to live?"

General Course Description

This course will introduce students to major periods, concepts, themes, and thinkers in the history of philosophy. Although breadth will be a priority, we will be guided this semester by studying how philosophers have famously questioned the nature of reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), God (philosophical theology), evil (morality), and freedom (political philosophy). By tracing the endurance of Socrates's famous claim that the "unexamined life is not worth living," students will learn the importance of philosophy for living a "meaningful" life of critical inquiry.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies

Course objectives for PHIL-1033 Introduction to Philosophy are:

1. To help students learn, understand, and evaluate the basic issues of philosophy from both a historical and theoretical perspective.
2. To help students gain familiarity with various pivotal texts in the history of philosophy.
3. To help students develop their skills in interpreting and critically analyzing texts.
4. To help students develop their skills in identifying and evaluating arguments as well as in formulating arguments of their own.
5. To help students improve their ability to read and write clearly and critically.
6. To help students appreciate the relevance of philosophical discourse in public and private life and to gain a greater understanding of their personal ethical commitments.
7. To inculcate students with a love of wisdom and a desire to live a philosophical life.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook-2021-22](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Students are expected to uphold the standards of “Academic Integrity” set forth by the [MSU Student Honor Creed](#). The instructor will notify the appropriate authority of any infringement of academic honesty.

“Cheating” includes the unauthorized use of certain information, materials, or devices in exams, papers, or assignments. Additionally, grading will abide by the University’s plagiarism policy. “Plagiarism” includes but is not limited to using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition, either by paraphrase or direct quotation. The use of materials generated by agencies engaged in “selling” term papers is also plagiarism. A student who makes use of plagiarized material, or anyone that profits from (or abets) cheating, will be DISMISSED from the course. Cases will also be referred to the Dean of Students for possible dismissal from the university.

This includes attempts to portray AI-generated material as evidence of a student’s personal knowledge of course content. Suspected papers will require in-person consultation with the professor before determining an appropriate grade and/or course of action, which can include failure of the assignment for plagiarism.

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual’s to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct: [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Grading

Table 1: Final grades for PHIL-2513/4513 will be determined according to the following distribution:

Assignments	Weight
Engagement	20%
Quiz average	10%
Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	25%
Exam #3	25%

Table 2: Grades will be administered on an A-F scale according to the following percentages:

Grade	Value
A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

Quizzes

Routine quizzes will be administered via D2L throughout the semester. Quizzes ensure that students keep pace with the syllabus. For this reason, quizzes will be based entirely off of class readings and lectures. Quiz dates are marked on the course schedule. When quiz averages are calculated for the final course grade, the lowest single quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes will be comprised of a single multiple-choice question pulled randomly from a larger “pool” of available questions. Each quiz will go live after class on Friday and remain available to take until midnight the next night. Quizzes cannot be taken after the window closes.

Exams

Three exams will be administered throughout the semester: all three follow a traditional written/multiple-choice exam. Exams are not cumulative. An optional review session precedes the third exam to ensure that students are as prepared for the exams as possible. Written assignment sheets detailing the specific requirements of each exam and suggestions for review will be provided to each student no less than a week prior to each exam.

Extra Credit

No extra credit will be accepted in this course. Students are therefore encouraged to keep pace with the syllabus from the start of the semester to avoid a situation in which extra credit would be desired.

Late/Missed Work

Extensions on coursework will not be granted except for highly exceptional circumstances. "Exceptional circumstances" include dire emergencies and official university activities. Deadline rescheduling needs to be discussed with the professor *before* the original deadline. Because the quizzes are online and will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete, extensions on quizzes will only be granted under *extremely* exceptional circumstances that are *entirely* out of the student's control.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement (see next two paragraphs below). An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Students in this course are graded on "Engagement," which includes but is not limited to attendance. You must be in attendance to be engaged, but attendance alone does not constitute engagement. "Engagement" describes the *minimum expectations* for good standing in this course: participating in class discussion, active listening, bringing the text with you to class, having done the assigned reading before coming to class, and refraining from disruptive and/or disrespectful behavior.

There is no distinction in this course between "excused" and "unexcused" absences (with the exception of absences for official university business, like, but not limited to, athletics). Students can miss class for any reason without penalty to their grade, but any student whose cumulative absences amount to three weeks of missed class will be dropped from the course. A student who misses class on the day of his or her protocol presentation (without prior arrangement with the professor) will receive a zero on the protocol and their overall Engagement grade will be reduced by a full letter grade.

Online Computer Requirements

Portions of this course make use of online materials. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** If you have any computer problems, a student helpdesk is available to you. The college

cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Help — Students should discuss any concerns with the instructor as soon as possible. Many of the readings will be difficult, so *please* ask questions in class for clarification. Office hours are available throughout the week. An appointment is not required for office hours consultation, since they're "drop-in" hours. Appointments can also be made on a case-by-case basis.

Recordings — Lectures, lecture notes, assignments, etc. remain the intellectual property of the instructor. Students are not permitted to record class or disseminate the content of our class.

Conduct — Actions that diminish the quality of other students' learning will not be tolerated. Insults, slurs, or attacks of any kind will be grounds for permanent removal from the course. Every student is expected to engage with the course material in a responsible and respectful manner. This course requires discussion of a diverse array of philosophical ideas. Students are likely to find some ideas popular and others unpopular. That's normal. Neither the course nor the instructor will defend any one philosophical viewpoint except insofar as it advances the teaching outcomes of the course. Therefore, disagreement is normal in classes of this nature; disagreement is conducive to positive learning outcomes, regardless of whether this disagreement pertains between texts themselves, between texts and readers, or between students. Disagreement that turns negative, derogatory, hostile, or otherwise demeaning *in any way* will not be tolerated in class.

Course Texts – Please print course readings and bring them to class on the day due, unless you have a device equipped to treat the e-text like a regular book. Please do not access your e-texts through your cell phone or laptop. All students are expected to come to class with the text in hand and having already done the reading.

Personal Technology – Cell phones, earbuds, and all other personal electronic devices must remain stowed and hidden for the duration of the class session. Unless permitted to accommodate a disability officially recognized by and registered with the Office of Disability Support Services, all notes must be taken by pen/pencil on paper rather than a laptop.

Email — Check emails regularly. This is the only way students will be informed about class cancellations or any changes to the course. Your instructor will email you via D2L. Therefore, either make sure you check your D2L email regularly, or change the settings of your D2L inbox to reroute your D2L emails to a preferred email address. When emailing your professors, please ensure that proper etiquette and professionalism is being observed. Always check the syllabus and the course schedule first to ensure that any questions are not already answered there. Your instructor will not respond at length to emails about writing assignments after the assignment has been posted. Please allow 24 hours for an email reply.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the [Schedule of Classes](#) each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational

programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Changes to Syllabus

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. All details of any changes made to the course will be made available to students via email.

Mandatory Reporting

Under Title IX, all MSU faculty are “mandatory reporters” of any disclosure from a student of sexual assault, abuse, harassment, dating violence, stalking, or other forms of sexual misconduct. It is the legal responsibility of a “mandatory reporter” to notify the Title IX coordinator if a student reports being the victim of any of the aforementioned abuses. For more information, please visit the [Sexual Misconduct Resource](#).

Session Schedule

Week One

8/29: Course introductions and overviews

8/31: Lecture and in-class exercises on deductive and inductive reasoning (no reading due)

Quiz 1 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Two

9/5: Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"

9/7: Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations"

Quiz 2 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Three

9/12: Plato, *Apology* 17a-28d

9/14: Plato, *Apology* 28e-42

Quiz 3 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Four

9/19: Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" 514a-518e

9/21: Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

Quiz 4 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Five

9/26: "The Life Story of Shakyamuni Buddha"

9/28: Optional in-class review session

Quiz 5 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Six

10/3: **Exam #1 due today during class session**

10/5: René Descartes, *Meditations* 1

Week Seven

10/10: René Descartes, *Meditations* 2

10/12: Descartes *Meditations* 2 continued; in-class lecture on Meditation 3 (no reading due)

Quiz 6 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Eight

10/17: Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?"

10/19: Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" continued

Quiz 7 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Nine

10/24: Optional in-class review session

10/26: **Exam #2 due today during class session**

Week Ten

Note: Last day to drop Spring courses with a "W" is 10/30. Later drops will receive "F."

10/31: St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways"

11/2: St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* chapters 2-3

Quiz 8 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Eleven

11/7: Pascal's Wager; The Epicurean Paradox

11/9: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Theodicy*

Quiz 9 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Twelve

11/14: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

11/16: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* continued

Quiz 10 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Thirteen

11/21: Freud, *The Future of An Illusion*

11/23: No Class. Thanksgiving.

Week Fourteen

11/28: Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"

11/30: Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Quiz 11 due in D2L Tests folder between 8:00 a.m. this Friday and 11:59 p.m. this Saturday

Week Fifteen

12/5: Course conclusions, wrap-up loose ends, evaluations, etc.

12/7: Optional in-class review session

Exam #3 will take place during our course's officially scheduled Final Exam slot.