



Course Syllabus: **History of Western Philosophy I**  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
PHIL-2503/4503  
Spring 2024

**Contact Information**

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**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**

Books are available at the campus store. All other texts will be available to download from D2L as a PDF.

- Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Modern Library Classics.
- Plato. *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Alan Bloom. New York: Basic Books.
- Hyman, Arthur, James J. Walsh, and Thomas Williams, eds. *Philosophy in the Middle Ages: The Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Traditions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Indianapolis: Hackett.

**Course Catalogue Description**

This course provides a historical and theoretical survey of Western philosophy from classical antiquity through the end of the Middle Ages. Individual research and evidence of the ability to explain and critically analyze philosophical ideas being studied will be required.

**Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies**

The main objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To help students learn and understand the basic issues of philosophy from both a historical and theoretical perspective.
2. To help students gain familiarity with various pivotal thinkers, theories, and 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 their own arguments through the effective and responsible use of evidence.
5. To help students improve their ability to read and write clearly and critically.
6. To help students appreciate the relevance of political and philosophical discourse in public and private life and to gain a greater understanding of their personal philosophical 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 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-2503 will be determined according to the following distribution:

Assignments	Weight
Engagement	20%
Protocol 1	10%
Protocol 2	10%
Socratic University Project	30%
Medieval Philosophy Teaching Tools Project	30%

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

### Projects

Students will complete two projects during the term. Both projects are designed to test students’ abilities to (a) explicate dense philosophical material accurately and thoroughly, (b) demonstrate an appreciation for philosophical subtlety, (c) apply philosophical concepts to everyday issues, and (d) make those ideas comprehensible and relevant to a wider, non-specialist audience. A detailed assignment handout outlining each project, its requirements, and its scope will be provided during the first week of class.

The first project is called “The Socratic University.” In *Republic*, Socrates and his interlocutors attempt to theorize the ideal city. In many ways, universities are regarded as microcosms of the wider world. In this project, each student will produce a written text that identifies how a specific topic or passage from *Republic*

helps clarify a complex issue on our campus. These “issues” can be positive or negative, they can be open-ended questions or value-neutral topics. The point is that students produce a text that demonstrates the relevance of studying Plato to everyday life on our campus. Topic focuses and the document style can be decided by the student. All students must meet with the professor to discuss their ideas for this project before getting started.

The second project is called “Medieval Philosophy Teaching Tools.” Medieval Philosophy is hard, and a lot of its major texts are indebted to earlier texts/ideas from the history of philosophy. In this project, students will pick a specific concept from our study of Medieval Philosophy and create tools to help teach this concept to a future student struggling with Medieval Philosophy. Students can submit this assignment either as a written project or as an audiovisual document.

- The audiovisual document must be made by recording your lecture as audio over PowerPoint slides of your own design and must include graphics that enhance the comprehensibility of your lecture. The audiovisual document should be a minimum of fifteen minutes long.
- The written document must provide two separate documents: (1) A visual aid handout that outlines the general philosophical argument for your visual learners. This visual aid should include detailed explanatory text, textual citations, analysis, etc. (basically, the written version of what would be spoken in an audio lecture) as well as a minimum of 2 detailed graphic that demonstrate these concepts. Not counting the graphic(s), this document should include a minimum of five pages of writing. (2) A single page “study guide” graphic distillation of the concept.
- Students enrolled in this course at the upper-level are required to include a research component to this assignment—demonstrating in their discussion of their chosen concept a familiarity with recent scholarly research on this same topic. Students enrolled at the lower-level are not required to include a research component, but they may do so if they wish.

### **Protocols**

On Tuesday of (nearly) every week, class will start with a protocol presentation. Protocols will be no more than two pages long (single-spaced) and will provide a detailed, analytic summary of the course progress from the previous week. By the end of the semester, the collected protocols will give a full account of our entire course. The purpose of these protocols is twofold: (1) For the protocol writers, it is a writing assignment that tests student’s ability to present concise yet detailed exegesis of course material beyond text summarization, and (2) for the rest of the class, it draws daily engagement away from a fixation on note taking and refocuses on discussion, creativity, and thinking. Each student will write two protocols. Typically, protocols will be written in pairs (i.e., in collaboration with another student in the course). A specific assignment handout outlining protocol requirements in more detail will be provided during the first week.

### **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 Work**

Assignments submitted late will accrue a late penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day late. Extensions on essays will be granted only in consultation with the instructor in advance and in rare circumstances. Because Protocols exist to anchor each week’s class sessions, extensions on Protocol assignments will not be granted.

### **Make Up Work/Tests**

Assignments more than a week late cannot be submitted and/or made up. Protocols can only be submitted on the day due and cannot be made up retroactively.

### **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 have to be in attendance to be engaged, but attendance alone does not qualify as engagement. "Engagement" includes attendance, participation in discussion and other course activities, active listening, evidence of preparedness, and the avoidance of distracting/distracted 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.
- Any student whose cumulative absences amount to two weeks of missed class will have their overall Engagement grade dropped by a full letter grade.
- Any student who misses class on the day of their 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 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 make audio or video recordings of class, and they are not permitted to 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 acquire *hard copies* of the required course texts. This will allow us greater movement through the text during our in-class discussions. E-texts are permitted if 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. All students are expected to come to class having (a) the text to be discussed in hand, and (b) read that text before class starts.

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. Unauthorized technology counts against the overall Engagement grade.

Email – Check emails regularly, since that will be the only method by which students are 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 has 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](#).

### Course Schedule

#### Week 1

1/16: Introduction to course, major themes, responsibilities, and one another  
1/18: Plato, *Apology* 17a-27e (PDF)

#### Week 2

1/23: Plato, *Apology* 28a-42a (PDF)  
1/25: Plato, *Republic* book I

#### Week 3

1/30: Plato, *Republic* book II  
2/1: Plato, *Republic* book II continued  
Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class on 1/30 from Group 1

#### Week 4

2/6: Plato, *Republic* book III (413c-417b)  
2/8: Dombrowsky, “Plato’s Noble Lie” (PDF)  
Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 2/6 from Group 2

#### Week 5

2/13: Plato, *Republic* book IV  
2/15: Plato, *Republic* book V (449a-465a) and book VI (509d-511c)  
Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 2/13 from Group 3

**Week 6**

2/20: Plato, *Republic* book VII (514a-521a)

2/22: Plato, *Republic* book VIII

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 2/20 from Group 4

**Week 7**

2/27: Plato, *Republic* book IX

2/29: Plato, *Republic* book X (595a-607e)

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 2/27 from Group 5

“The Socratic University” Project due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 3/4

**Week 8**

3/5: Aristotle, *Poetics* ch. 4 (paragraph 1), chs. 6-16

3/7: Aristotle, *Physics* book I (chs. 1, 5-9); book II (chs. 1-3)

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 3/5 from Group 6

**Week 9**

3/12: No class. Spring Break.

3/14: No class. Spring Break.

**Week 10**

3/19: Aristotle, *Physics* book II (chs. 4-8); book IV (chs. 10-14)

3/21: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* book IV (ch. 1); book I (ch. 9); book VII (chs. 1-8)

**Week 11**

3/26: Aristotle, *De Anima* book II (chs. 1-2, 4-5, 11-12); book III (chs. 4-7)

3/28: No class. Holiday break.

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 3/26 from Group 7

**Readings for the rest of the semester can be found in the Philosophy in the Middle Ages textbook. There are two exceptions (Boethius book I and Aristotle), so please plan ahead.**

**Week 12**

4/2: Augustine, *Confessions* books II, VII; Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy* book I (PDF)

4/4: Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* book III prose 9-11

**Week 13**

4/9: Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* book IV prose 1-6

4/11: Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* book V

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 4/9 from Group 8

**Week 14**

4/16: Pseudo-Dionysius, “The Mystical Theology”; Avicenna, *The Salvation* “Metaphysics”

4/19: Avicenna, *The Cure* “The Soul” fifth treatise

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 4/16 from Group 9

**Week 15**

4/23: Aquinas, “On Being and Essence”

4/25: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, “Treatise on God,” Question 2; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII (chs. 6-7)

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 4/23 from Group 10

**Week 16**

4/30: Duns Scotus, “The Possibility of Knowing God”

5/2: Course Conclusions, wrap-up, review

Protocol due in D2L dropbox and printed in class 4/30 from Group 11 (if needed)

“Medieval Philosophy Teaching Tools” Project due in D2L dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on 5/9