



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Philosophy

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

PHIL-1033 Section 101

Fall 2024

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Tyler M. Williams

Office: Bea Wood 236

Office hours: Mon/Wed 11:00-12:00; Tues/Thurs 8:30-9:30; Tues 1:00-2:00

Office Phone: (940) 397-4125

E-mail: tyler.williams@msutexas.edu

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?”

Textbook & Instructional Materials:

- John Cottingham, editor. *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*. Third Edition. Wiley Blackwell, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-119-16572-9
- 3 “Blue Book” examination books, 11” x 8.5”

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Course objectives for PHIL-1033 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](#)

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. “Plagiarism” includes but is not limited to using the published or unpublished works of another person without recognition. This includes attempts to portray AI-generated material as evidence of a student’s personal knowledge of course content and/or academic skill. A student who makes use of plagiarized material, or anyone that profits from (or abets) cheating, will be dismissed from the course and referred to the Dean of Students.

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](#).

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student’s studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Quizzes (10 at 4 points each)	40
Exam 1, multiple-choice portion	35
Exam 1, written portion	65
Exam 2, multiple-choice portion	35
Exam 2, written portion	65
Exam 3, multiple-choice portion	35
Exam 3, written portion	65
Engagement	60
Total	400

Table 2: Value of final letter grades

Letter grade	Percentage value	Point value range
A	90-100%	358-400
B	80-89%	318-357
C	70-79%	278-317
D	60-69%	238-277
F	0-59%	0-237

Homework

Homework assignments comprise daily reading assignments, which should be completed by the time class session starts. Class activities will be based on the readings and will work under the assumption that students have come to class with the reading prepared. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor for help on reading strategies or on the reading's content.

Quizzes

10 quizzes will be administered online throughout the semester. Dates for these quizzes appear on the Course Schedule. Every quiz will go live at noon on Thursday and will remain live until noon on Saturday, which allows students 48 hours to access the quiz. Quizzes will be comprised of a single multiple-choice question pulled randomly from a larger "pool" of available questions. Once opened, the quiz will last a maximum of 5 minutes. Questions are entirely multiple-choice and will be based on that week's readings and in-class activities. Because quizzes are intended to ensure that students are keeping pace with the course, missed quizzes cannot be retaken after the fact.

Exams

Three exams will be administered throughout the semester. The third exam will take place during Exam week. None of the exams are cumulative; each one picks up where the previous left off. Exams are divided between an online multiple-choice portion and an in-person written portion. The written portion will be limited to class time (120 minutes) and will use the Blue Notebooks. The multiple-choice portion will be accessible in D2L in the same folder as the weekly quizzes, and will be limited to 80 minutes once opened. The multiple-choice section of the exam will require that students use a LockDown browser. See tables above for point values. Exam dates appear on the Course Schedule below in more detail. Every exam date is preceded by an optional in-class review session.

Extra Credit

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to strategize study skills and get clarification of course content before the need for extra credit would arise.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted unless arrangements are made with the professor ahead of time. See next section below for details.

Make-up Work/Tests

Missed quizzes or exams cannot be made up after the deadline passes. If a student needs an alternate deadline for a scheduled exam, they are required to arrange that alternate time with the professor prior to the original exam deadline. Instances that warrant such rescheduling include documented illness, medical emergency, or official university activity.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: August 29, 2024

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" November 25, 2024

Final Exam: December 10, 2024, 8:00-10:00 a.m.

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

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. An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records daily. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning before 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). This means that students can miss class for any reason without penalty to their grade (i.e. they do not need to provide an "excuse"), but any student whose cumulative absences amount to three weeks of missed class will be dropped from the course.

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 a 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!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also 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. Office hours are available throughout the week and 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 without the prior permission of the instructor. This policy does not apply to a student's own hand-written notes.

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 bring readings to class on the day due, and please bring the hard copy (no e-text, unless it is needed to accommodate a disability registered with the Office of Disability Support Services). 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. This policy exists to enhance engagement by mitigating distraction.

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 this syllabus and course schedule first to ensure that any questions are not already answered there. Please allow 24 hours for an email reply.

Use of AI-generated Content in Writing Assignments

Unless explicitly permitted in the individual assignment description, students are not allowed to produce written work that includes content and/or revisions that rely on AI-generated content. Please refer to the Academic Misconduct policy outlined above. Students suspected of using AI-generated content in their writing assignments will be notified by the professor and will be required to meet with the professor within five business days of notification. Failure to meet with the professor after notification will be treated as an admission of guilt.

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 an 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 WATC. 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 prohibit 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 the 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

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

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Readings are listed according to their due date. Unless indicated otherwise, all readings come from the required course textbook. Texts marked “(D2L)” can be for free on our D2L course page.

Week 1: What’s the Point of Doing Philosophy?

- Tuesday 8/27: Course introductions.
- Thursday 8/29: Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy” (D2L).
- No quiz due this week. Instead, bring 3 “Blue Book” notebooks to class on Tuesday. Students who complete this assignment on time will get one free quiz grade to replace any missed quiz later.

Week 2: Deductive and Inductive Logic and Logical Fallacies

- Tuesday 9/3: Lessons on argumentative logic (no reading due).
- Thursday 9/5: Lessons on argumentative logic (no reading due).
- Quiz 1 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 9/7.

Week 3: The Unexamined Life is Not Worth Living

- Tuesday 9/10: Plato, *Apology* (D2L).
- Thursday 9/12: Plato, *Apology* continued.
- Quiz 2 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 9/14.

Week 4: The Platonic Structure of Being, Reality, and Intelligibility

- Tuesday 9/17: Plato, *Allegory of the Cave* (textbook: Part II, chapter 1).
- Thursday 9/19: Plato, *Allegory of the Cave* continued.
- Quiz 3 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 9/21.

Week 5: Exam #1

- Tuesday 9/24: Optional in-class review session.
- Thursday 9/26: Exam #1 written portion during class.
- Exam #1 multiple choice portion available from 11:00 a.m. on 9/26 until 11:59 p.m. on 9/28.
- No quiz due this week.

Week 6: How Do I Know With Certainty That All Of This Is Real?

- Tuesday 10/1: Descartes, *Meditations* (textbook: Part I, chapter 4).
- Thursday 10/3: Descartes, *Meditations 2* (D2L).
- Quiz 4 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 10/5.

Week 7: To What Extent Can Experience be a Foundation for Truth?

- Tuesday 10/8: Hume, *Enquiry...* (textbook: Part I, chapter 7; and Part VII, chapter 5).
- Thursday 10/10: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* continued.
- Quiz 5 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 10/12.

Week 8: What Distinguishes Legitimate from Illegitimate Truth Claims?

- Tuesday 10/15: Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (textbook: Part VII, chapter 9).
- Thursday 10/17: Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* continued.
- Quiz 6 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 10/19.

Week 9: Exam #2

- Tuesday 10/22: Optional in-class review session.
- Thursday 10/24: Exam #2 written portion during class.
- Exam #2 multiple choice portion available from 11:00 a.m. on 10/24 until 11:59 p.m. on 10/26.
- No quiz due this week.

Week 10: Ontological, Cosmological, and Teleological Proofs for the Existence of God

- Tuesday 10/29: Anselm, *Proslogion* (textbook: Part VI, chapter 1).
- Thursday 10/31: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (textbook: Part VI, chapter 2).
- Quiz 7 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 11/2.

Week 11: Critique of the Design Argument

- Tuesday 11/5: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (textbook: Part VI, chapter 7).
- Thursday 11/7: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* continued.
- Quiz 8 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 11/9.

Week 12: The Existence of God and the Problem of Evil

- Tuesday 11/12: Epicurean Paradox (D2L) and Leibniz, *Theodicy* (textbook: Part VI, chapter 6).
- Thursday 11/14: Leibniz, *Theodicy* continued.
- Quiz 9 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 11/16.

Week 13: How Should I Live My Life?

- Tuesday 11/19: Pascal, *Pensées* (textbook: Part VI, chapter 5).
- Thursday 11/21: Lucretius, *Nature of the Universe* (textbook: Part XII, chapter 1); Seneca, *Moral Letters* (textbook: Part XII, chapter 2); and Augustine, *Confessions* (textbook: XII, chapter 3).
- Quiz 10 is due in the D2L tests folder by 12:00 p.m. (noon) on Saturday, 11/23.

Week 14: What Is the Meaning of Life?

- Tuesday 11/26: Schopenhauer, *On the Vanity of Existence* (textbook: Part XII, chapter 6).
- Thursday 11/28: No class. Thanksgiving.
- No quiz due this week.

Week 15: Is There a Meaning to Life?

- Tuesday 12/3: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (textbook: Part XII, chapter 7) and Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (textbook: Part XII, chapter 9).
- Thursday 12/5: Optional in-class review session.
- No quiz due this week.

Final Exam

- Date: Tuesday, December 10
- Time: 8:00-10:00 a.m. (for written portion)
- Location: our regularly scheduled classroom (for written portion)
- ***Important:** This exam slot is allocated by the university to our specific class time. Therefore, no other courses should conflict with this exam. If a student is enrolled in another course that offers an exam at the same time as this one, it is the student's responsibility to reschedule *that other* exam.
- Exam #3 multiple choice portion available on D2L from 8:30 a.m. on 12/10 until 11:59 p.m. on 12/12.