

**University of North Texas**  
**Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 2026)**  
**PHIL 1050.412 (UNT Internet Course)**

Instructor: Atoosa Afshari  
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Office hours: By appointment (Canvas message or email to schedule)

**1. Rationale and course outline:**

This course is an introduction to the rich heritages of the world's philosophical traditions. Rather than assuming or maintaining a particular definition of philosophy, this course will engage "philosophy" as an ongoing site of contestation and debate: What is philosophy? Who counts as a philosopher? What can be recognized as a serious philosophical endeavor? How does philosophy intersect and differ from theory, critique, belief, science, and ethics? What is philosophy for and can it make any difference in the world? None of these are settled questions, but reflect ongoing debates with material consequences. Congruent with the aim of opening rather than closing or assuming the question of "philosophy" this course engages multiple cultural perspectives and approaches.

The course begins where philosophical questions often first confront us: in the middle of everyday life as we ask questions about how we should live and how we know what is right or good. From there we often move to questions of society: how do we live well together, what makes a society just, what is justice and is it possible given the complexities of life? Reflecting on what is right and just leads to questions of truth and how we can have knowledge. If we are going to explore what it means to have good or true knowledge then we will also need to ask questions of the real: what is reality, what is it composed of, what makes it up, how do we distinguish reality from illusion? Finally, we will conclude the class with questions of identity, subjectivity, and embodied life: who am I, what am I, how should or can I relate to human and more-than-human others?

**2. Course Structure:**

This is an asynchronous class with 3x required meetings for participation (these will be announced ahead of time and students will have multiple options for meeting times). Interaction with me and your fellow students will primarily take place in Canvas. I am available for Zoom or in-person office hours by appointment (please email or Canvas message me to schedule). There are 14 weeks of content that you will move through, grouped by eight units (see the schedule below for units). New content will be available weekly.

**3. Course Outcomes:**

By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- accurately and fairly represent the thoughts and ideas of another
- think critically about a text or set of ideas
- clearly and compellingly communicate their own conclusions in conversation with others
- articulate what social and personal responsibility looks like in particular circumstances

#### 4. . Course Requirements:

##### Participation:

Participation will take place through three types of assignments: discussion posts, discussion meetings via Zoom, and peer review of written work. You will only be given one type of participation assignment per week.

##### Communication:

Communication regarding course information will be handled through Canvas; be sure to pay attention to Canvas announcements. If you have questions or concerns at any point during the term and wish to contact the instructor, please do so via email ([atoosa.afshari@unt.edu](mailto:atoosa.afshari@unt.edu)) or by coming to office hours. The instructor will do their best to respond within 24 hours Monday – Friday and may not respond on weekends. General questions about course content and assignments can also be referred to the Q & A discussion thread in Canvas.

#### 2. Course readings:

- **Required text:** Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 9th edition.
- Other reading selections will be provided as PDF files in Canvas (you can find them by going to ‘Files’ → ‘Non-Textbook Readings’ or by following the links in the modules)

#### 3. Assessments:

Final grades will consist of the following:

Discussions	35%
Final Essay	20%
Assignments	45%

#### 5. Grading Policies and Procedures

Final course grades will reflect the following scale:

A=90%+   B=80-89%   C=70-79%   D=60-69%   F=0-59%

*Each assignment has a clearly marked due date. Late work will only be accepted with prior permission from the instructor. If you are going to miss a deadline for reasons beyond your control, please email me as soon as possible so we can work out the best path forward. Otherwise, all work turned in after the due date/time will receive a grade of zero unless the student has a [university-excused absence \(opens in a new window\)](#) and provides documentation.*

*I recognize that many of us are still working in less-than ideal circumstances and often with intensified non-academic responsibilities. Please contact me if you are unable to make assignment deadlines due to ongoing commitments or personal difficulties.*

## **6. Academic Integrity**

A student who is cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. Please be advised that assignments submitted via Canvas are run through TurnItIn plagiarism and GenAI-detection software.

According to the UNT Policy 06.003, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
- d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or
- e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and
- b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

In this class, your written assignments and discussion posts are based on reflections of your own life and experiences. As such, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) through tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini, and Claude is not permitted **unless otherwise stated in an assignment prompt**. These tools can be helpful in certain contexts – they might even help you to synthesize the readings for this class, for example – but the focus of our assignments is on personal reflection, which is not something that GenAI can do for you since it doesn't live your life! Using GenAI to complete any part of your assignments (**where not otherwise permitted by a particular assignment prompt**) will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it can curtail your self-expression and ability to relay experiences from your own life, and will be addressed according to the [Student Integrity Policy \(opens in a new window\)](#). Be sure to check each and every assignment prompt for its specific instructions regarding GenAI. Communications from the instructor of this class will never be generated using AI.

## **7. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

## **Retention of Student Records**

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

## **Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)**

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

## **. Course Schedule**

*\*Please note that the schedule is subject to change; any changes will be announced via Canvas*

## 8. Weekly Modules & Assignments

### Week 1 (Pages: 1–19) — Unit 1: What is Philosophy?

- **Please Introduce Yourself — 5 pts**
- Unit 1: What is Philosophy – Learning Objectives and Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 1: Definition of terms and identification of figures — 8 pts**
- **Week 1: Discussion response — 10 pts**
- Socrates: Atoosa’s Video (*link*)

### Week 2 — Unit 2: How Should One Live?

- Unit 2: How Should One Live? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- **Week 2: Readings and reading questions — 14 pts**
- **Week 2: Reading and Discussion response — 10 pts**
- Confucius: Atoosa’s Video (*link*)

### Week 3

- Week 3: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 3: Readings and Reading Questions — 8 pts**
- **Week 3: Discussion response — 10 pts**
- What do you think about Virtue Ethics? Atoosa’s Video (*link*)

### Week 4

- Week 4: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 4: Readings and reading questions — 5 pts**
- **Week 4: Reading and Discussion Response — 10 pts**
- **Unit 2 essay: “How should one live?” — 35 pts**

### Week 5 — Unit 3: How Can I Know What is Right?

- Unit 3: How Can I Know What is Right? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- Week 5: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 5: Readings and reading questions — 10 pts**
- **Week 5: Reading response — 25 pts**

### Week 6

- Week 6: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 6: Readings and reading questions — 10 pts**
- **Week 6: Reading and Discussion Response — 10 pts**

### Week 7

- Week 7: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 7: Readings and reading questions — 10 pts**
- **Week 7: Reading and Discussion Response — 10 pts**
- **Unit 3 essay: “How can I know what is right?” — 35 pts**

### **Week 8 — Unit 4: What Makes a Just Society?**

- Unit 4: What Makes a Just Society? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- Week 8: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 8: Readings and reading questions — 12 pts**
- **Week 8: Reading and Discussion Response — 10 pts**

### **Week 9 — Unit 5: Is Justice Possible for All?**

- Unit 5: Is Justice Possible for All – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- Week 9: Materials (*materials*)
- Week 9: Readings and Reading Questions — **0 pts**
- **Week 9: Reading Discussion and Response — 10 pts**
- *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (PDF) (*reading file*)
- Ethics of Care: Atoosa’s Video (*link*)

### **Week 10 — Unit 6: Is Knowledge Possible?**

- Unit 6: Is Knowledge Possible? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- Week 10: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 10: Reading and Reading Questions — 10 pts**
- **Week 10: Discussion and Response — 10 pts**
- Epistemology Atoosa’s Video (*link*)

### **Week 11**

- Week 11: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 11: Reading and Reading Questions — 10 pts**
- **Week 11: Discussion and Response — 10 pts**
- **Unit 6 essay: “Is knowledge possible” — 35 pts**

### **Week 12 — Unit 7: What is Really Real?**

- Unit 7: What is Really Real? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)
- Week 12: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 12: Readings and reading questions — 12 pts**
- **Week 12: Discussion response — 10 pts**

### **Week 13 — Unit 8: What Am I / Who Am I?**

- Unit 8: What Am I Who Am I? – Learning Objectives (*materials*)

- Week 13: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 13: Readings and reading questions — 6 pts**
- **Week 13: Discussion response — 10 pts**
- What Am I Who Am I? Atoosa's Video (*link*)

#### **Week 14**

- Week 14: Materials (*materials*)
- **Week 14: Readings and reading questions — 8 pts**
- **Week 14: Discussion response — 10 pts**

#### **Week 15**

- **Final essay (Core requirement) — 36 pts**