

University of North Texas
Introduction to Philosophy (Spring 2025)
PHIL 1050.004

Instructor: Anna Kokareva, *she/her*
Email: Anna.Kokareva@unt.edu
Class time: M/W/Fri 1:00 – 1:50 pm
Class location: ENV 120
Office hours: by appointment
Office location: ENV 334

I. 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?

II. 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.

III. Format and Procedures:

This class will be fully in person with some lecture to introduce, contextualize, and clarify readings. Students should expect to actively engage with the material and class time will focus on small and large group discussion, application exercises, low-stakes in-class projects, and creative activities.

IV. Course Requirements:

Class attendance and communication policies:

Attendance:

Since our class depends on discussion and student involvement, your presence matters! I do not offer unexcused absences in this class. Your attendance counts towards the final grade and you can see how it changes on canvas. There will be no Zoom option for this class. If you are out ill and the CDC guidelines still require that you quarantine, then please ask your peers for lecture notes, or reach out to me with questions.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for class content, assignments missed, and upcoming due dates. If you do not stay for the entirety of class, you will be counted absent. You will also be counted **absent** if you are **wearing earphones** during class without ODA permission or spend excessive time on your phone or laptop; please be aware that you may be asked to leave the classroom if you engage in these activities.

Communication:

Communication regarding course information will be handled through **Canvas announcements**. If you have questions or concerns at any point during the term and wish to contact me, please do so via email. Include your name and the course code (PHIL 1050.004). You can address me as Professor, Anna, or Ms. Kokareva. I will do my best to respond via email within 24 hours Monday-Thursday; please do not expect a reply over the weekend and the Spring break. Any issues related to the completion of the course should be communicated ahead of time. Emails pertaining to information that is already available to you on Canvas or on the syllabus may not be responded to at all.

Emergency communications:

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials. If Canvas is not accessible during the emergency, contact me via email for more information.

Course readings:

Required text: Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 9th edition.

Other reading selections will be provided as PDF files on Canvas.

V. Assessments, Grading Policies and Procedures

Final grades will consist of the following:

Attendance	20%
Participation	20%
Reading Quizzes	30%
Assignments	30%

Attendance (20%)

Attendance is mandatory in this class. I will be taking down attendance in every class. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade. You cannot get an A if you miss more than 15% of classes. If you are having a family emergency or feeling sick, please contact me as soon as possible – I will mark you present.

Participation (20%)

This class implies active participation in discussions as they build a foundation for your learning. You are required to submit two discussion reports during the semester. These are similar to journal entries demonstrating that you (a) have been thinking and discussing class materials with other students; (b) reflected upon the material individually. More instructions will be provided on Canvas.

Weekly reading quizzes (30%)

Weekly reading quizzes are meant to help you find and pay attention to the argument and the most important concepts of the readings. They are graded automatically and are due every **Monday at 10:59 am**. There will be ten quizzes in total in the semester. Reading quizzes are time sensitive, so I will not be able to give extensions.

Assignments (30%)

1. *Portfolios* are creative submissions of various types of artwork that illustrate your engagement with philosophical concepts and your personal position. The artwork may include but not be limited to visual art, movies, music, theatrical performances, poetry, sculpture, etc. Portfolios will be available for the whole class to read and discuss. There will be three portfolio submissions during the semester. Specific instructions and the rubric will be provided on Canvas.
2. *Final essay* is an individual critical reflection on the prompt distributed by the instructor. The essay should be between 600 - 800 words and is due **May 4, 11:59 pm**. Specific instructions and the rubric will be provided on Canvas.

Final course grades will reflect the following scale:

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

LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. If something comes up, you must communicate with me ahead of the deadline, and I will determine whether an exception to this policy is warranted.

VI. Academic Integrity

Students caught 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. According to the UNT catalog, 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.

Please note that AI-generated content (incl. Assistance from Grammarly, Wordtune, and other paraphrasing tools) is not permitted and falls under UNT's definition of "cheating". All papers submitted on Canvas will be run through TurnItIn, which detects both plagiarism and AI-generated language.

<https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/turnitin-0>

VII. Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

VIII. 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.

IX. Inclusivity, chosen names, and pronouns

UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The professor is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. In the classroom and online, students are expected to

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal nature

Chosen Names: A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. You can also change your display name in your Canvas account settings.

Pronouns: Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

X. Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and

assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](#) for more resources.

XI. 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>

XII. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go <http://success.unt.edu/>.

XII. 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.

XIII. COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: What is philosophy?		
Week 1 January 13-17	Mon 1/13	Greetings & Course overview
	Wed 1/15	Kessler, Voices of Wisdom (VoW hereafter): Part One, Unit 1, "What is Philosophy (p. 1-6, stop at the heading, "What is Rationality?")
	Fri 1/17	Midgley, "Philosophical Plumbing" [PDF on Canvas] SYLLABUS QUIZ DUE 11:59pm
UNIT 2: How should one live?		
Week 2 January 20-24	Mon 1/20	NO CLASS
	Wed 1/22	VoW, Part Two, unit 3: Buddha (p. 49-55) READING QUIZ #1 DUE 10:59 am
	Fri 1/24	VoW, Part Two, unit 3: Confucius (p. 56-59)
Week 3 January 27-31	Mon 1/27	VoW, Part Two, unit 3: Plato (p. 60-75) READING QUIZ #2 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 1/29	VoW, Part Two, unit 3: Aristotle (p. 76-83)
	Fri 1/31	Discussion
Week 4 February 3-7	Mon 2/3	Purcell, "Life on the Slippery Earth" [web link on Canvas] READING QUIZ #3 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 2/5	VoW, Part Two, unit 3: Bhagavad-Gita (p. 84-92)
	Fri 2/7	Discussion
UNIT 3: How do I know what is right?		
Week 5 February 10-14	Mon 2/10	VoW, Part Two, unit 4: Kant (p. 113-119) READING QUIZ #4 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 2/12	VoW, Part Two, unit 4: Mill (p. 120-129)
	Fri 2/14	Discussion
Week 6 February 17-21	Mon 2/17	VoW, Part Two, unit 4: Al-Ashari (139-40) PORTFOLIO #1 DUE 11:59 pm
	Wed 2/19	Kimmerer, "The Gift of Strawberries" in <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i>

		[PDF on Canvas]
	Fri 2/21	Discussion
Week 7 February 24-28	Mon 2/24	Midgley "How Large is a Culture" in Can't We Make Moral Judgments, (pages 83-86, stop at the heading "The deeper unity") READING QUIZ #5 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 2/26	Nussbaum, "Judging other Cultures: The case of Genital Mutilation" [PDF on Canvas]
	Fri 2/28	Discussion DISCUSSION REPORT #1 DUE 11:59pm
UNIT 4: What makes a just society?		
Week 8 March 3 - 7	Mon 3/3	VoW, Part Two, unit 5: Rawls (p. 170-1, 191-205); MLK (p. 215-225) READING QUIZ #6 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 3/5	Lorde, "The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's House" in <i>Sister Outsider</i> [PDF on Canvas]
	Fri 13/7	Discussion
SPRING BREAK		
Week 9 March 10 -14	Mon 3/10	NO CLASS
	Wed 3/12	NO CLASS
	Fri 3/14	NO CLASS
UNIT 5: Is justice possible for all?		
Week 10 March 17-21	Mon 3/17	VoW, Part Two, unit 6: West & Pharr (p. 237-48) PORTFOLIO #2 DUE 11:59 pm
	Wed 3/19	VoW, Part Two, unit 6: Williams (p. 249-59)
	Fri 3/21	Discussion
UNIT 6: Is knowledge possible?		
Week 11 March 24-28	Mon 3/24	VoW, Part Three, unit 7: Al-Ghazali, Descartes (p. 311-332) READING QUIZ #7 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 3/26	VoW, Part Two, unit 7: Hume, Clifford (p. 333-340)

	Fri 3/28	Discussion
Week 12 March 31 - Apr 4	Mon 3/31	Subramaniam, "Singing the Morning Glory Blues: A Fictional Science" in <i>Ghost Stories for Darwin</i> [PDF on Canvas] READING QUIZ #8 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 4/2	VoW, Part Three, unit 7: Koller (p. 350-55)
	Fri 4/4	Discussion
UNIT 7: What is really real?		
Week 13 April 7 - 11	Mon 4/7	VoW, Part Four, unit 9: Laozi, Plato (p. 421-442), Shankara (p. 443-451), Berkeley (p. 452-458) READING QUIZ #9 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 4/9	Watch <i>Lobster</i> (2015) in class (finish at home)
	Fri 4/11	Discussion DISCUSSION REPORT #2 DUE 11:59pm
UNIT 8: Who am I?		
Week 14 April 14 - 18	Mon 4/14	VoW, Part Four, unit 11: Buddha (p. 525-28), Dennett (p. 530-40) READING QUIZ #10 DUE 10:59 am
	Wed 4/16	VoW, Part Two, unit 11: McCloskey (p. 558-63)
	Fri 4/18	Discussion
Week 15 April 21 - 25	Mon 4/21	Kimmerer, "Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide" in <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> , Diaz, "American Arithmetic" in <i>Postcolonial Love Poem</i> [PDFs on Canvas] PORTFOLIO #3 DUE 11:59 pm
	Wed 4/23	Anzaldua, "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" in <i>Borderlands La Frontera</i> [PDF on Canvas]
	Fri 4/25	Discussion
Week 16 April 28 - May 2	Mon 4/28	TBD
	Wed 4/30	TBD
	Fri 5/2	Reading day - NO CLASS