

University of North Texas
Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 1050.003

Instructor: Ben Larsen, he/him
Email: ben.larsen@unt.edu
Class time: M/W/F 12:00-12:50pm
Class location: CHEM 253
Office hours: Thursdays 1:00-3:00
Office location: ENVS 372

Teaching Assistant: Ray Ishibashi
Email: Ray.Ishibashi@my.unt.edu
Office hours: Thursdays 3:30-5:30
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 cite 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:

1. Class attendance, participation, and communication policies:

Attendance:

You are expected to be on time and attend every class. Attendance will be taken **5 minutes** after the start time of class. If you are not present when attendance is taken, you will be counted absent for the day. Excessive absences will lower your grade. Owing to the contingencies of life, **you are permitted 5 absences**, after which each subsequent absence will lower your final attendance grade by one letter grade. If you are absent, there is no need for documentation explaining the absence—all absences will be treated the same, meaning there is no difference between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. If a student misses a class, that student is 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 spending excessive time on your phone; please be aware that you may be asked to leave the classroom if you engage in these activities.

Participation:

This is a single assessment given to the class as a whole, so everyone’s “Class Participation” grade will be the same. The grade will be assessed by the instructor according to a rubric we will develop together, as a large group, at the beginning of the semester.

Communication:

Communication regarding course information will be handled through Canvas. If you have questions or concerns at any point during the term and wish to contact the instructor via email, please contact him using the address listed above. The instructor will do his best to respond within 24 hours Monday-Friday and may take longer to respond on days when class does not meet. 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.

2. Course readings:

- Required text: Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 9th edition.
- Other reading selections will be provided digitally

3. Assessments:

Final grades will consist of the following:

Attendance	30%
Class participation	10%
Reading Quizzes	30%
Assignments	30%

V. 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%

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 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. Students caught using AI in their assignments will be asked to attend the final paper hours scheduled for this class to complete an in-person final exam. <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. Therefore, a portion of the student's participation grade will reflect their ability 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. 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>

XI. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. 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

Week 1, Aug 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kessler, <i>Voices of Wisdom</i> (VoW hereafter): Part One, Unit 1, “What is Philosophy (p. 1-15) Midgley, “Philosophical Plumbing” [PDF on Canvas] 	Welcome, introductions
Unit 2	How should one live?	
Week 2, Aug 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Two, unit 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buddha (p. 49-55) Confucius (p. 56-59) 	Reading Quiz
Week 3, Sept 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Two, unit 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato (p. 60-75) Aristotle (p. 76-83) 	No class on Monday, September 4: University closed for Labor Day Reading Quiz
Week 4, Sept 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” [PDF on Canvas] VoW, Part Two, unit 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bhagavad-Gita (p. 84-92) 	Reading Quiz
Unit 3	How can I know what is right?	
Week 5, Sept 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Two, unit 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kant (p. 113-119) Mill (p. 120-129) 	Reading Quiz
Week 6, Sept 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimmerer, “The Gift of Strawberries” [PDF on Canvas] VoW, Part Two, unit 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Ashari (139-40) Hernandez (140-146) 	Reading Quiz
Week 7, Oct 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held, “The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory” [PDF on Canvas] 	Reading Quiz

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nussbaum, “Judging other cultures: The case of Genital Mutilation” [PDF on Canvas] 	
Unit 4	What makes a just society?	
Week 8, Oct 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Two, unit 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rawls (p. 170-1, 191-205) MLK (p. 215-225) 	Reading Quiz
Units 4 & 5	What makes a just society? & Is justice possible for all?	
Week 9, Oct 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Todd, “Fish, Kin and Hope” [PDF on Canvas] VoW, Part Two, unit 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West (p. 237-243) Pharr (p. 243-249) 	Reading Quiz
Units 5 & 6	Is justice possible for all? & Is knowledge possible?	
Week 10, Oct 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Two, unit 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Williams (p. 249-260) VoW, Part Three, unit 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Ghazali, Descartes (p. 311-332) 	No Class on Friday, Oct 27
Unit 6	Is knowledge possible?	
Week 11, Oct 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VoW, Part Three, unit 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hume, Clifford (p. 333-340) Whyte, “Way Beyond the Lifeboat” [PDF on Canvas] 	No Class on Monday, Oct 30
Units 6 & 7	Is knowledge possible? & What is really real?	

Week 12, Nov 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VoW, Part Three, unit 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Koller (p. 350-55) • VoW, Part Four, unit 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laozi, Plato (p. 421-442) • Shankara (p. 443-451) 	
Unit 7 & 8	What is really real? & What am I? Who am I?	
Week 13, Nov 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VoW, Part Four: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley (p. 452-458) • Descartes (p. 506-521) • Buddha (p. 525-28) 	
Nov 20-26		Thanksgiving Week: No classes meet
Unit 8	What am I? Who am I?	
Week 14, Nov 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anzaldua [PDF on Canvas] • VoW, Part Four, unit 11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dennett (p. 530-40) • McCloskey (p. 558-63) 	
Week 15, Dec 4		Reading day
Week 16, Dec 11		Final Exam Presentations and/or oral exams Final projects due during finals week

