

Kevin Siefert
Spring 2021

Office: By appointment via Zoom
Email: kevin.siefert@my.unt.edu

PHIL 1050.003: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Someone said: "The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did." Precisely, and they are that which we know.

T.S. ELIOT, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

DESCRIPTION: This course is not intended to provide answers. Philosophy is the artistic creation of concepts, whose pursuit of the Truth or of Knowledge is never wholly achieved. In coming to understand and challenge our contemporary world, and the knowledge claims which support it, we will investigate historically into the concepts which have influenced and provided our world's foundations. As we question into such sedimented epistemes, let us be vigilant in remembering that all of what we know today has come by means of much difficult thinking and scrutiny. And some of what we believe we know today may turn out to be quite "false." Is there an objective criterion by which we can evaluate what is True or not? Or an objective criterion by which to evaluate Justice? Is the decline of traditional values and religion in the "West" a cause of anxiety and concern? Or, is this decline the truest sense of liberation? What is it that makes us uniquely human compared to the other "animals?" These are the kinds of questions we will be broaching in this course this semester. We will begin with the "foundation" of Western philosophy, and eventually confront contemporary social and environmental issues, including the possibility that our contemporary world is approaching the dissolution of Truth (nihilism).

COURSE MATERIALS:

Required Text(s): *Classics of Philosophy* (3rd Edition) by Louis Pojman and Lewis Vaughn

Any readings outside of this text will be made available through Canvas.

CLASS MEETINGS: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10-10:50 AM in Cury 103

OFFICE HOURS: I will be available for office hours to discuss the course material by appointment only. Students must either write me an email or set an appointment with me after our scheduled meeting time. Please keep in mind that office hours are not intended to make up for an entire class session. You will be responsible for any material that you miss due to your absence. If Zoom meetings are not an option for you, please come see me and we will arrange for an alternative way of holding office hours.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE: The best way to reach me is through email. In your email correspondence with me you must include the time our class meets in the subject field. Example: PHIL 1050.003 M/W/F 10AM. You must also sign the email so that I know who I am communicating with. Please keep in mind that I have numerous courses, with many students. If you do not include the class meeting time and your name, I cannot guarantee that I will reply.

LAPTOPS/COMPUTERS: Due to the tendency of students to use laptops for purposes outside of classwork, laptops will not be allowed in class. All material from the textbook that you will need to refer to will be provided by me, either through PowerPoint presentations, or verbal indication of where to find the material being discussed.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Philosophy is a field of study that requires constant engagement with our peers. Students will be expected to participate and voice their understandings of the course readings, as well as their assessments of the arguments. Students are expected to come to class having read the material, and prepared to discuss the readings. Philosophic texts are not easy. Students should engage with the material as much as possible. It is not advised to engage the assigned readings after lectures.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Students are expected to show respect to the instructor as well as to their fellow classmates. In coming to study philosophy we may not always agree. Disagreement, however, should never invite disrespect or hostility.

ADA STATEMENT: The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112-The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

GRADE ASSESSMENT:

Attendance (10%): Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester. For every absence students will lose 1% of their attendance grade. UNT policy defines an excused absence as an absence due to a University-sponsored event, passing of a family member, religious holiday, or documented illness. Documentation is required.

Weekly Quizzes/Discussion Boards (15%): Each week there will be either a quiz posted to Canvas or a question posted to the Discussion Board. None of these assignments are meant to be exhaustive, but rather to ensure that students are keeping pace with the course and doing the assigned readings.

Mid-Term Exam (20%): The mid-term exam will cover the assigned content, readings, and lectures from the first five weeks of the semester. The examination will be multiple choice and contain fifty questions.

Thesis Driven Paper (25%): Students will write an *argumentative* research paper, no longer than 8 pages. This paper will be due at the end of the semester. More information regarding the format of the paper and the exact requirements will come after the mid-term.

Final Exam (30%): The final exam will cover the course material (including readings and lectures) from the midterm until the final week. The examination will consist of 75 multiple choice questions.

Note that this course will require a lot of careful reading each week. There will be continual assessment of the readings by way of weekly quizzes/discussion board posts. Students are highly encouraged to keep to the pace of the course. We will do our best to maintain the schedule below, but course schedules change. Continual attendance and participation are necessary to do well in this course. **Late work will not be accepted.** The final grade distribution is as follows:

100 – 93%	A	86 – 83 %	B	76 – 73%	C	66-63%	D
92 – 90%	A-	82 – 80%	B-	72 – 70%	C-	62 – 60%	D-
89 – 87%	B+	79 – 77%	C+	69 – 67%	D+	60%>	F

PLAGIARISM/CHEATING: There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism/cheating. If a student is caught plagiarizing/cheating I will report the incident to administration for further action. The student will

receive a zero on the assignment in which s/he was caught cheating, and may face further punitive actions (including suspension). For further information, please consult UNT's policy on student conduct and student discipline.

COVID-19: While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to attend class due to COVID-19 including symptoms, potential exposure, pending or positive test results, or if you have been given specific instructions to isolate or quarantine from a health care provider or a local authority. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused from class.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

SCHEDULE: This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in-class or on **Canvas**. It is your responsibility to obtain the amended schedule provided by instructor. **(NOTE: The reading assigned for each day is discussed *that day*, and should be read before the class meets).**

Week 1	1/11: Course Introduction
	1/13: Introductory Lecture on Philosophy
	1/15: Pre-Socratics/Plato
Week 2	1/18: NO CLASSES: MLK DAY
	1/20: Plato: <i>The Apology</i>
	1/22: Plato: <i>Euthyphro</i>
Week 3	1/25: Plato: <i>Crito</i>
	1/27: Plato: <i>Republic</i> excerpts from Book VI
	1/29: Plato: <i>Republic</i> excerpts from Book VII
Week 4	2/1: Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Books VI & X
	2/3: Aristotle: <i>De Anima</i> excerpts
	2/5: Aristotle: <i>Physics</i> Books II & III
Week 5	2/8: Descartes: "First and Second Meditations" in <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
	2/10: Descartes: "Third and Fourth Meditations" in <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
	2/12: Descartes: "Fifth and Sixth Meditations" in <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
Week 6	2/15: Review for Midterm Exam
	2/17: MIDTERM EXAM
	2/19: Hume: <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> Chapter 1
Week 7	2/22: Hume: <i>Enquiry</i> Chapters 2 & 3
	2/24: Hume: <i>Enquiry</i> Chapters 4 & 5
	2/26: Hume: <i>Enquiry</i> Chapter 7
Week 8	3/1: Kant: <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> Preface to the Second Edition
	3/3: Kant: Excerpts from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>

	3/5: Transition to Post-Kantian thought
Week 9	3/8: Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i>
	3/10: Singer: "A Utilitarian Defense of Animal Liberation"
	3/12: Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Week 10	3/15: Kierkegaard: Excerpts from Journals
	3/17: Kierkegaard: Excerpts from <i>Either/Or</i>
	3/19: Kierkegaard: "Is There a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" from <i>Fear and Trembling</i>
Week 11	3/22: Nietzsche: Excerpts from <i>The Gay Science</i>
	3/24: Nietzsche: "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense" & excerpts from <i>The Anti-Christ</i>
	3/26: Nietzsche: Excerpts from <i>The Will to Power</i>
Week 12	3/29: Brief transition to the phenomenological method
	3/31: Heidegger: Excerpts from <i>Being and Time</i>
	4/2: NO CLASSES
Week 13	4/5: Levinas: Excerpts from <i>Totality and Infinity</i> and excerpts from <i>Ethics and Infinity</i>
	4/7: Wollstonecraft: Excerpts from <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>
	4/9: Beauvoir: "Introduction" to <i>The Second Sex</i>
Week 14	4/12: Warren: "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism"
	4/14: W.E.B. DuBois: <i>Souls of Black Folk</i> Chapter 1
	4/16: Wenz: "Just Garbage: The Problem of Environmental Racism"
Week 15	4/19: Abu-Jamal: Excerpts from <i>Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?</i>
	4/21: Nihilism: Excerpts from Camus and Cioran
	4/23: NO CLASSES: THESIS DRIVEN PAPER DUE VIA CANVAS
Week 16	FINAL EXAMINATION (Date and Time TBD)