**University of North Texas**

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2025

**PHIL 1050.003 & PHIL 1050.004**

**Instructor:** Savannah Stevens

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**Class Location:** ENV 120

**Time:** MWF 12- 12:50 PM (003) ~ 1-1:50 PM (004)

**Office Hours:** By appointment only

**Office Hours Location:** ENV 372A

1. **COURSE RATIONALE**

This course is an introduction to philosophy as a way of thinking about how to live, what we can know, and what a just society looks like. Together, we’ll read a range of philosophical texts from different traditions and use them to ask questions that sharpen our reasoning and help us to hold meaningful discussions. We will practice "doing philosophy," rather than just learning about it, this means examining your own views, listening to others, and learning to think critically and clearly. A central goal is that the habits you build here: careful reading, open-minded questioning and clear communication will stick with you well beyond this class.

1. **LEARNING OBJECTIVEES**

* Comprehend and analyze philosophical texts
* Summarize and evaluate arguments
* Develop and defend original positions
* Apply philosophy to broader contexts
* Practice collaborative inquiry and communication

1. **COURSE OUTCOMES**

***By the end of this course, you should be able to:***

* Understand key concepts, questions, and traditions in philosophy
* Comprehend, summarize, and evaluate philosophical arguments
* Compare and critique different philosophical perspectives
* Recognize philosophy’s broader relevance in academic and everyday life

1. **FORMAT & PROCEDURES / COURSE** **REQUIREMENTS**

**Required text:**

* Kessler, Gary E. Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013.
* All other readings will be posted on Canvas in the Modules tab, organized by week.

**Weekly Readings:**

* You are responsible for reading the assigned text before class. These readings form the basis for quizzes, discussions, and assignments.

**Assignments (50% of Final Grade)**

This course includes several types of assignments, which together make up **50% of your final grade**. Each type is explained below.

**Essays (2 Total)**

You will write two short essays (750-1,000 words each). These essays are thesis-driven/argumentative versus “stream of consciousness.” We will discuss tips for writing philosophical essays during our class meetings. Essay prompts will be posted on Canvas when unlocked.

* **Essay #1:** Graded using UNT’s *Personal and Social Responsibility rubric*
* **Essay #2:** Graded using UNT’s *Critical Thinking / Creative Reasoning rubrics*

**Cumulative Review Assignments (CRAs):** There will be two (2) cumulative reviews on Canvas. *Each Review:*

* Mostly draws from earlier in-class mini-quizzes and previously taken Canvas quizzes
* Is graded for accuracy
* Allows *one* attempt only
* Are due on a Sunday at 11:59 PM (see Course Schedule for exact dates)

### **QUIZZES (+ SOME PARTICIPATION)**

**Weeks 1 - 3: Weekly Canvas Quizzes:**

* Typically, one quiz per assigned reading - taken on Canvas
* Each quiz has 5 questions, and you get two attempts; the higher score is kept
* Quizzes are due *before* your class begins

**Weeks 4 - 14: Weekly, In-class, Mini-Quizzes:**

During weeks 5-14 please, bring paper and pen/pencil each day. You’ll turn in handwritten mini-quizzes at the end of our class meeting. *Mini-quizzes:*

* Count toward your participation grade
* Serve as study guides – Once returned, keep them!
* Provide the question pool for you Cumulative Review Assignments (CRAs).
  + In the case that participation drops once we begin mini-quizzes, we’ll switch back to Canvas quizzes that will be due before the start of class, instead, and these quizzes will count toward your quiz grade.

1. **ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION / CLASS DISCUSSIONS**

**ATTENDANCE:** You are allowed up to 5 absences—no documentation required. All absences are treated the same (no distinction between “excused” or “unexcused”). If you arrive exceptionally late or leave early, you may be marked absent.

**PARTICIPATION:** This course depends on your **active engagement** with the texts and with each other. Participation doesn’t mean having the “right” answer or speaking constantly, but does mean you must show up prepared, ready to contribute. Regular attendance is required to earn full participation credit. Missing class, being unprepared, or not completing in-class work will lower your participation grade. See the Inclusivity & Conduct section for expectations around respectful discussion.

***Participation includes:***

* Contributing to in-class discussions (large and small group)
* Participating in creative or application-based activities
* Completing low-stakes mini-quizzes

**IV. GRADING WEIGHTS / SYSTEM AND POLICIES**

GRADE WEIGHTS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Attendance | 12.5% |
| Participation | 12.5% |
| Canvas Quizzes | 25% |
| 2 Cumulative Review Assignments /  2 Essays | 50% |
| **Total** | **100%** |

GRADING SCALE

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **A** | 90 – 100% |
| **B** | 80 – 89% |
| **C** | 70 – 79% |
| **D** | 60 – 69% |
| **F** | 0 – 59% |

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Late assignments are (generally) ***not* accepted** except in rare cases where you’ve spoken with me ***well in advance*** of the due date. Last-minute requests or messages sent after the deadline**are likely not to be considered.** Please manage your time accordingly and reach out early if something comes up. In the case of emergencies, please communicate me.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** 2 opportunities. One is the syllabus quiz, the second is the CTE at the end of the semester. Each opportunity is worth .5%, totaling a potential 1% increase towards your final grade. There may also be other extra credit opportunities offered periodically.

**IIV. COMMUNICATION, OFFICE HOURS & EMERGENCIES**

**Reaching me:** Most course announcements and updates will be posted on **Canvas**. If you have a question, please check the syllabus and Canvas first (chances are the answer is already there). If you still need to reach out, the best way to contact me is through **Canvas message**. **I** do my best to respond within **48 hours (Monday–Friday).** Messages about information already listed in this syllabus or on Canvas may not receive a reply.

***When you message me, include:***

* The day/time our class meets in the subject line (e.g., PHIL 1050.003 – MWF 12 PM).
* Your full name and clear question in the message body.

1. **Office hours:** I will be available for office hours to discuss the course material by appointment only. Students must either email me or schedule an appointment with me after our regularly scheduled class sessions. Please note that office hours are not intended to replace an entire class session. You will be responsible for any material that you miss due to an absence.

***Emergency communications****:* UNT utilizes a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students of critical information in the event of an emergency, such as severe weather, campus closures, and health and public safety emergencies (e.g., 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 unavailable during the emergency, please contact me via email for more information.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** A primary goal of this course is to develop the ability to think critically and independently. To do so, I expect you to generate your ideas, views, and critiques of our reading materials. Thus, any use of AI will result in a 0 (zero). AI includes any and all platforms like ChatGPT, Grammarly\*, etc. Keep in mind that written assignments are check through Canva’s TurnItIn feature. Given the possibility of false positives, I strongly suggest drafting your work with track changes in a word document (Google Docs, etc.) with the version history that clearly shows your writing process/progress. Academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited and will result in a grade of 0 (zero). If you are unsure what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the University of North Texas (UNT) guidelines on academic dishonesty.

**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 inappropriate behavior will be directed to leave the classroom, and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students for consideration of whether the student's conduct has violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, and field trips. The Code of Student Conduct can be found on theUniversity of North Texas (UNT) webpage.

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA STATEMENT):** The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodations 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 before 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 student's privacy. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

**RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS:** Student records concerning this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records, including exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers, submitted during the course are retained for at least one calendar year after course completion. Coursework 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, as well as the university's policy, which can be found on the university website in accordance with these mandates.

**SUCCEED AT UNT:** The University of North Texas (UNT) strives to provide you with a high-quality education and a supportive environment that fosters your academic growth and development. As a faculty member, I am dedicated to supporting your academic success. Here is how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about the campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go to the UNT Success webpage.

**STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING:** Student feedback is a crucial component of participation in this course. The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at the University of North Texas (UNT). This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester, providing you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

**COURSE** **SCHEDULE FA2025**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **INTRO** | **WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?** | **Canvas Quizzes** |
| **Week 1**  Aug. 18 | **Wednesday:**   * Reed, “What is philosophy?” * Reed, “On Reading Philosophical Texts” * **Kessler (VoW) Part One,** (p. 1–6, stop at "What is Rationality")”   **Friday:** Plato (p. 60 - 76) | **W**: Quiz #1 & Quiz # 2 (Reed)  **F:** Quiz #3 (Plato)   * Syllabus Quiz (Optional) \*1st BONUS OPPORTUNITY\* - **Due** Sunday, AUG 24th at 11:59 pm |
| **Unit 1** | **HOW SHOULD ONE LIVE?** | **Canvas Quizzes** |
| **Week 2**  Aug. 25 | **Monday:** Aristotle (VoW p. 76 - 83)  **Wednesday:** Buddha, “The Middle Way” (VoW p. 53-56)  **Friday:** Lugones “World Traveling” - Class read | **M:** Quiz #4 (Aristotle) - 8/25  **W:** Quiz #5 (Buddha) - 8/27  No Friday Quiz |
| **Week 3**  Sep. 1 | **Monday:** NO Classes (Labor Day)  **Wednesday:** Confucius (VoW p. 56-60)  **Friday:** Bhagavad-Gītā (VoW p. 86-92) | **W:** Quiz #6 (Confucius) - 9/3    **F:** Quiz #7 (Bhagavad-Gītā) - 9/5 |
| **Week 4**  Sep. 8 | IN CLASS FILM | IN CLASS FILM |
| **Unit 2** | **HOW CAN I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT?** | **Mini-Quizzes Begin (in class)** |
| **Week 5**  Sep. 15 | **Monday:** Kant (VoW p. 113- 120)  **Wednesday:** Mill (Vow p. 120-129)  **Friday:** Movie Discussion: Deontology vs. Utilitarianism | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Kant)  (Mill) |
| **Week 6**  Sep. 22 | **Monday:** Al-Ashari (VoW, p.139-140)  & TBD  **Wednesday:** MLK*, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”* PDF    **Friday:** In class discussion - Essay introductions | **Mini-quiz:**  (Al-Ashari)  (TBD)  (MLK) |
| **Week 7**  Sep. 29 | **Monday:** Lugones, *“World Traveling”* - PDF  **Wednesday**: WRITING WORKSHOP *- Bring thesis/essay draft to class*  **Friday:** TBD | **Mini-quiz:**  (Lugones)  (TBD)  **Friday:**   * **Essay #1 -** “*How Can I Know What’s Right?*” - **Due Friday, OCT 3RD at 11:59 PM** |
| **Unit 3** | **What Makes A Just Society?** |  |
| **Week 8**  Oct. 6 | **Monday:** Rawls (VoW p. 330-341)  **Wednesday:** Marx & Engles (selections) PDF  **Friday:** Discussion /Review session | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Rawls)  (Marx & Engles) |
| **Week 9**  Oct. 13 | **Monday:** Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility)* p. 1-10) PDF  **Wednesday:** Winner, “*Do Artifacts Have Politics?”* | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Jonas)  (Winner)  **Cumulative Review Assignment #1** (Due SUNDAY, OCT 19th at 11:59 pm) |
| **Unit 4** | **IS JUSTICE POSSIBLE FOR ALL?** |  |
| **Week 10**  Oct. 20 | Kyle Whyte  Immigration  Sunuara Taylor | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Whyte)  (Taylor)  (TBD) |
| **Unit 5** | **IS KNOWLEDGE POSSIBLE?** |  |
| **Week 11**  Oct. 27 | **Monday:** Al-Ghazali, (p. 311-322)  **Wednesday:** Koller (VoW p. 350-356)  **Friday:** Nagle, *“What’s It Like to Be a Bat?”* | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Al-Ghazali)  (Koller)  (Nagle) |
| **Week 12**  Nov. 3 | **Monday:** Hume (VoW p. 333-340)  **Wednesday:** Descartes (VoW p 311-332)  **Friday:** In class discussion - ICA’s | **Mini-quizzes**:  (Hume)  (Descartes) |
| **Unit 6** | **WHAT IS (REALLY) REAL?** |  |
| **Week 13**  Nov. 10 | **Monday:** Laozi (VoW p. 421-433)  **Wednesday:** Shankara (VoW p. 443-453)  **Friday:** Plato, (VoW, p. 434-443) | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Laozi)  (Shankara)  (Plato) |
| **Unit 7** | **WHAT AM I? WHO AM I?** |  |
| **Week 14**  Nov. 17 | **Monday:** the Buddha (VoW, p. 525-528)  AND McCloskey (VoW, p. 558-563)  **Wednesday:** Dennett (VoW, p. 530-540)  **Friday:** Review Session / Writing workshop for Final Essay. | **Mini-quizzes:**  (Buddha)  (McCloskey)  (Dennett)   * **Cumulative Review Assignment #2** (Due SUNDAY, NOV 23rdat 11:59 pm) |
| **Nov. 24-30** | NO CLASSES -  **Thanksgiving break** | NO CLASSES -  **Thanksgiving break** |
| **Week 15**  Dec. 1 | **Monday:** WRITING WORKSHOP  *-Bring thesis/essay draft to class* | **Friday:**   * **Essay #2 Due -** *“Community reflection Essay”* - **Due DEC 5th at 11:59 PM** * **CTE’S DUE** \*2nd Bonus Opportunity\* |
| **FINALS WEEK**  Dec. 8 | Final Exams Week | Final Exams Week |

**\*Note:**This syllabus and course schedule are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced in class and/or posted on Canvas in a timely manner. Students are responsible for keeping up with adjustments to the course schedule, assignments, or policies as communicated by the instructor.

**Important University Dates:** <https://registar.unt.edu/sites/default/files/fall-2025-academic-calendar.pdf>

**UNT Academic Dishonesty:** <https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf>