University of North Texas

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2026

PHIL 1050 (section .003 & section. 004)

Instructor: Prof. Savannah Stevens
E-mail: savannah.stevens@unt.edu

M / W / F Sections:
Section 3: 12:20-1:10 PM | **Location:** WH 217
Section 4: 1:25-2:15 PM | **Location:** ENV 115

Office Hours: By appointment only | **Office Location:** ENV 375J

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" - examining arguments, questioning assumptions, and articulating reasons in public discussion. A central goal in this course is to build academic habits, such as careful reading, open-minded questioning and clear communication skills that will stick with students well beyond this course.

Introduction to Philosophy is a *survey course*, which means we will move through several major areas of philosophy rather than spending the entire semester mastering a single topic. At times, the course may feel conceptually broad or fast-moving because philosophy itself asks different kinds of questions about ethics, politics, knowledge, reality, etc. The goal is steady engagement with ideas over time through reading, discussion, writing, and collaborative analysis (not immediate mastery of every reading before class).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Read philosophical texts carefully and identify key claims, concepts, and assumptions
- Analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments through discussion and writing.
- Connect philosophical ideas to contemporary issues, film, technology, and everyday experience.
- Practice philosophical inquiry through questioning, interpretation, and collaborative discussion.

COURSE OUTCOMES

- Explain major philosophical questions and compare competing positions on those questions.
- Reconstruct arguments from assigned readings accurately and charitably.

- Develop and defend a clear philosophical position using reasons, objections, and textual support.
- Articulate what social and personal responsibility looks like across various circumstances

FORMAT & PROCEDURES / COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required text: Kessler, Gary E. Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013. **You will need the textbook by the start of week 3.**

Note: Any course material outside of the textbook will be available through Canvas in the appropriate Modules.

Weekly Readings / Reading Philosophy: You are responsible for reading the assigned text *prior* to class meetings. Our readings form the basis for quizzes, discussions, and assignments. You are not expected to fully understand the readings before class. Come prepared having identified key ideas, questions, or points of confusion so we can clarify, challenge, and work through them together in class.

COMMUNICATION / OFFICE HOURS

Reaching me: 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. Please, remember to message me on CANVAS (**not** through *Outlook*/Student e-mail*)*.

When you message me on CANVAS, include:

- The time our class meets in the subject line and your course section. (e.g., PHIL 1050 [Section #] - 12:20.
- **Include:** Your full name and clear question in the message body.

Office hours: I will be available for office hours to discuss the course material **by appointment only.** Students must either **message** me **through Canvas** 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.

ASSIGNMENTS

This course includes two (2) *types* of assignments:

- **2 Essays - (Together total 25% of Final Grade):** You will write two (2) essays (750-1,000 words each).

- We will discuss tips for writing philosophical essays during our class meetings. Essay prompts will be posted on Canvas when unlocked. Due dates/time are posted on our Course Schedule

- **Cumulative Review Assignments (Together total 25% of Final Grade)**
  - There will be two (**2**) cumulative review assignments (CRAs) taken in class.

Each Cumulative Review: Mostly draws from earlier in-class mini-quizzes and previous Canvas quizzes. You must be present in class to take both CRAs. *See course schedule for exact dates.

QUIZZES

Weeks 1 - 4: Weekly *Canvas* Quizzes:

- Taken on Canvas - **due before** the **start of** our **class** session.
- Each quiz has 5 questions, and you get 2 attempts (the higher score is kept). No time limit.

Weeks 5 - 14: Weekly (In-class) Mini-Quizzes: During **weeks 6-12** please, bring **paper** and **pen/pencil** each day to complete mini-quizzes. You will keep these quizzes throughout the semester to help you study for your CRA assignments.

LATE WORK POLICY: 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 to messages sent after the deadlines are *likely* not to be considered. In the case of emergencies, please communicate with me. I understand that life 'does happen,' so in in the case of non-emergencies it may still be worthwhile to reach out if you happen to miss a major assignment. However, please manage your time accordingly and when possible reach out early if something comes up.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is mandatory. An attendance sheet will be circulated during each class meeting, and students are responsible for initialing next to their own names to be marked present. Absences are generally treated equally; there is no distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, and documentation is not required except for university-approved absences. Documented university-excused absences will be handled in accordance with university policy. Students who arrive significantly late or leave significantly early may be marked absent at the instructor's discretion. Students who miss more than 12.5% of class meetings are not eligible to earn an A in the course. Signing in for another student or allowing another student to sign in on one's behalf, constitutes academic dishonesty. Any student involved in attendance fraud will receive a zero for the semester participation grade, which is worth 12.5% of the final course grade.

PARTICIPATION: This course depends on active engagement with the texts and with one another. In this course, participation does not mean having the "right" answer or speaking constantly. **In-class**

participation includes Coming to class prepared, contributing when asked, and taking discussion seriously.

GRADING WEIGHTS / SYSTEM AND POLICIES

Attendance	12.5%
Participation	12.5%
Canvas Quizzes	25%
Assignments: 2 Cumulative Review Assignments /2 Essays	50% (total)
Total	**100%**

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

EXTRA CREDIT

#1. Completing the ***optional*** **syllabus quiz** (on **Canvas**). See course schedule for due date/time.

#2. Completing the **SPOT** (**CTE**) at the end of our course. More details will be provided towards 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.

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 likely result in a zero (0) at the instructors' discretion**. AI includes any and all platforms like ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc. Keep in mind that written assignments are checked through Canvas's TurnItIn feature. Given the possibility of false positives, there may be instances where it is possible to meet in-person to extensively go through the details of your paper with the instructor. 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 the University of North Texas (UNT) webpage.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (ODA STATEMENT):
The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students 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 meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment.

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 Canvas 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 according to 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. 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 PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING: 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.

Note: **The 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://registrar.unt.edu/sites/default/files/fall-2026-academic-calendar.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

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