



University of North Texas
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
SPRING 2026
PHIL 1050.001 & PHIL 1050.002
Instructor: Prof. Savannah Stevens

E-mail: savannah.stevens@unt.edu

Class Location: WH 317

Time: MWF 10- 10:50 AM (001) ~ 11-11:50 AM (002)

Office Hours: By appointment only

Office Hour Location: ENV 372A

I. 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.

II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Engage with and analyze philosophical texts
- Identify, summarize, and evaluate philosophical arguments, including points of tension and disagreement
- Develop and defend original positions through discussion and writing
- Apply philosophical ideas to broader academic and everyday contexts
- Practice collaborative inquiry and public philosophical communication

III. COURSE OUTCOMES

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

- Identify key concepts, questions, and traditions in philosophy
- Compare and critique different philosophical perspectives
- Articulate your own philosophical positions clearly in both discussion and writing
- Recognize philosophy's relevance to academic inquiry and everyday life



IV. FORMAT & PROCEDURES / COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required text: Kessler, Gary E. *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*. 9th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013.

*** Any course material outside of the textbook will be available on Canvas in the Modules tab which is organized by week.

Weekly Readings: 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 readings before class. The goal is engagement, not mastery. Class discussion is where ideas are clarified, challenged, and developed.

Reading Philosophy / How Learning Works in This Course: Come to class having read the text, have attempted to identify key ideas or points of confusion, and prepared to work through them together.

I. 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:

II. Essays (2 Total; 25% of Final Grade)

You will write two (2) short essays (750-1,000 words each). These essays are thesis-driven/argumentative assignments. We will discuss tips for writing philosophical essays during our class meetings. Essay prompts will be posted on Canvas when unlocked.

Essay #1: Partially Graded using UNT's Personal and Social Responsibility rubric

Essay #2: Partially Graded using UNT's Critical Thinking / Creative Reasoning rubrics

III. Cumulative Review Assignments (CRAs; 25% of Final Grade)

There will be two (2) cumulative review assignments (CRAs) on Canvas.

Each Review:

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

IV. QUIZZES (+ SOME PARTICIPATION)

Weeks 1 - 3: Weekly Canvas Quizzes:

- Quiz timing is predictable. (I.e., for **weeks 1-3**: Typically, one **quiz** per assigned reading - **taken on Canvas**.)
- Each quiz has 5 questions, and you get 2 attempts (the higher score is kept).
- Quiz questions are often revisited and discussed during class sessions.



Weeks 5 - 14: Weekly (In-class) Mini-Quizzes:

During weeks 5-14 please, bring paper and pen/pencil each day to complete mini-quizzes.

Mini-quizzes:

- Count toward your *participation grade*
- Serve as study guides (Provides the question pool for your 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.

V. ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION / CLASS DISCUSSIONS

ATTENDANCE: You are allowed up to **3 absences**—no documentation required. Typically, 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.

*Exceptions made with documentation for university excused absences.

PARTICIPATION: This course depends on active engagement with the texts and with one another. Participation does not mean having the “right” answer or speaking constantly; it means coming to class prepared, contributing when asked, and taking discussion seriously. **Regular attendance is required to earn full participation credit.** Excessively missing class, arriving unprepared, or not completing in-class work will lower your participation grade.

Philosophy is a public, collaborative activity. Understanding often develops through discussion rather than prior to it. For that reason, **silence is not a neutral position in this course**, and **regular participation is expected of all students.**

*See the Inclusivity and Conduct section for expectations regarding 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

VI. GRADING WEIGHTS / SYSTEM AND POLICIES

Attendance	12.5%
Participation	12.5%
Canvas Quizzes	25%
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%

VII. 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 to messages sent after the deadlines 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 with me.

VIII. EXTRA CREDIT:

There are two (2) extra credit opportunities. One opportunity is completing the syllabus quiz (on **Canvas**). The second is completing the SPOT (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.

IX. COMMUNICATION, OFFICE HOURS & EMERGENCIES

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.

When you message me on CANVAS, include:

- The day/time our class meets in the subject line (e.g., PHIL 1050.001 – MWF 10 am).
- Your full name and clear question in the message body.

X. Office hours: I will be available for office hours to discuss the course material **by appointment only**. Students must either **email 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 sessions. 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 zero (0)**. 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, 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 zero (0) for the assignment.** 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 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 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. 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.

***READING SCHEDULE:** The weekly reading and assignment schedule is posted on Canvas in the Modules tab. It is the student's responsibility to consult Canvas (and the reading schedule document) regularly for required readings and due dates.

***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://catalog.unt.edu/content.php?catoid=36&navoid=4054#spring>

UNT Academic Dishonesty:

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