University of North Texas
Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 1050.003 (Spring 2026)

Instructor: Shoshana McIntosh (she/her)
Email: shoshana.mcintosh@unt.edu or via Canvas messages
Class time: T/TH 9:30 am -10:50 am
Class location: GAB 114
Office Location: EESAT 320F
Office Hours: By appointment (office or zoom)

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 site 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?

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

COURSE STRUCTURE

This class will be fully in person with a large emphasis on discussion coupled with lectures to introduce, contextualize, and clarify readings. Outside of class, your main responsibility will involve reading, taking notes, completing annotation quizzes, and writing two essays. We will cultivate critical close reading of philosophical texts. All readings should be completed before coming to the class they are assigned for.

Engaging in dialogue, sharing ideas, and grappling with complex questions together will be a key part of this course. This may take the form of pair, small group, or full class discussions. Because these center around our readings, the time and effort you put into out-of-class reading and note-taking will have a direct impact on our ability to grow together as an intellectual community.

I recognize and value that we all bring different experiences and perspectives to class; these enrich our intellectual community. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication and mutual respect. While disagreements will arise and are an important part of collectively thinking together, personal attacks are unacceptable. We will create guidelines and expectations for engaging with each other at the beginning of the semester and return to these as needed to evaluate and reflect. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please contact me so we can meet and address any issues.

COURSE REQUIRMENTS & POLICIES

1. Materials:
   - Required text: Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader,* 9th edition (new and used copies may be bought or rented through UNT Barnes & Noble but are also available through many online retailers)
   - Other reading selections will be provided as PDF files in Canvas

2. Assignments and Grading

   - **Participation Assignments (7 pts each x 10):** These written assignments will be completed in-person during class. They will vary depending on our goals and the topics being covered. These may include: (1) reading or lecture responses; (2) small group discussion worksheets; (3) draft essay outlines; (4) class reflections or (5) other critical writing responses. The questions or prompts will be given in class the day of. **No make-ups allowed unless student has a university approved absence.** Graded as follows:
     - 0 = Student was absent or did not complete
     - 3-6 = Complete but there are areas for improvement (feedback will be given)
     - 7 = Student has satisfactorily completed the assignment
   - **Reading Annotation Quizzes (10 pts. each x 5):** Annotation skills will be introduced in class. Students will practice these skills through annotating the assigned pdf reading in Canvas. Not fully completing the assigned skills or putting in minimal effort will result in a lower grade. *See Canvas for assignment details and rubric.*
   - **Essays (40 pts. each x 2):** *See details and rubrics in Canvas.*

Assignment type	Points Possible	% of Final Grade
Participation Assignments (7 pts. x 10)	70	35%
Reading Annotation Quizzes (10 pts. x 5)	50	25%
Essay 1	40 points	20%
Essay 2	40 points	20%
Total Points Possible	**200 points**	**100%**

NOTE: The overall Canvas grade is not correct as it is not weighted. Always refer to the syllabus to see where you're at.

Final Grades will be based on the A-F scale:
A = 90-100%
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%,
D = 60-69%,
F = 59% and below.

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.

3. Class Attendance and Communication Policies

Attendance: Your presence and engagement in class are deeply valuable for us all. Please attend class as often as possible.

Cell phone policy: Cell phones must be turned off or silenced during class.

Computer policy: Computer and internet use be used only in relation to class work (i.e. taking notes or looking at a reading). If their use becomes a distraction from class this will affect your participation grade.

Headphones & Earbuds policy: Headphones and earbuds must be removed in class. This allows you to be fully engaged in class and respectful to your classmates and instructors.

Class expectations: Come to class with the required readings completed; prepared to ask questions, make connections, and engage in discussion**.** Bring your textbook and pdf reading materials (either digital or printed), writing utensil, and notes to every class.

Course Communication:

Communication to the entire class regarding course information will be handled through Canvas; be sure to pay attention to Canvas announcements. For individual communication, you may use my email shoshana.mcintosh@unt.edu or message me via Canvas messages. I am usually very prompt in my replies, but please give me 48 hours to respond before sending a follow up email.

Emergency communication:
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. *Please confirm that your Eagle Alert contact information is correct via the myUNT portal.

4. Course AI Policy

To ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and to preserve the integrity of the course, students are not permitted to submit text that is generated by artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Claude, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance for any classwork or assessments. This includes using systems like Grammarly that generate predictive text.

Using AI in this way undermines your ability to develop critical thinking, writing, and research skills that are essential for this course and your academic success. Using GenAI to complete written assignments will be considered a violation of academic integrity and will be addressed according to the Student Integrity Policy.

If AI use is suspected or flagged by Turnitin, the following steps will be taken as appropriate:

1) Student will meet with instructor in person to discuss why GenAI use is suspected and to allow the student a chance to clarify how the assignment was completed.
2) Verified violations of this AI policy or other campus academic integrity policies (see below) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for further review.
3) Students *may* be provided an opportunity to complete a proctored, in-person version of a similar assignment to demonstrate a student's ability to perform comparably.

TIPS: When writing essays use UNT OneDrive (all students have access to Word through OneDrive). Track your changes. Save notes, outlines, and early drafts. If you are using any software to help with revisions/editing make sure to save your rough draft first and submit it along with your polished version. If your essay is flagged by Turnitin as being likely 100% AI generated and you cannot provide proof that it is your original work, then the violation will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for further review.

UNT POLICIES

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including,

but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

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.

ADA policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodations 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. 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.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004)

The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The

University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Emergency Notification & Procedures
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.

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. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) to learn more.

Survivor Advocacy
UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-5652648.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT & STUDENT SERVICES

Student Support Services
General Student Services website (https://vpaa.unt.edu/advising/resources/students)

Mental Health
UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- Student Health and Wellness Center (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
- Counseling and Testing Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
- UNT Care Team (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)

- UNT Psychiatric Services (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
- Individual Counseling (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

Food Insecurity

- UNT Food Pantry (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/desresources/programs/food-pantry/index.html)
- Denton Community Food Resources (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/desresources/programs/food-pantry/resources)

COURSE READING & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	ASSIGNED READINGS / DUE DATES
UNIT 1: What is philosophy?		
Week 1	Tuesday 1/13	• Course Introduction
	Thursday 1/15	• Kessler, *Voices of Wisdom* (*VoW*):"What is Philosophy?" sections 1.1 (p. 1-6) and 1.3 (p. 12-14) [PDFS in Canvas for those who have not gotten their textbooks yet]
UNIT 2: How should one live?		
Week 2	Tuesday 1/20	• Butnor, Excerpt from "Critical Communities: Intellectual Safety and the Power of Disagreement" [PDF in Canvas] • *VoW*: Buddha (p. 49-56)
	Thursday 1/22	• *VoW:* Confucius (p. 56-60) • **Participation Assignment 1 (in class)**
Week 3	Tuesday 1/27	• *VoW:* Plato day 1 (p. 60-76)
	Thursday 1/29	• *VoW:* Plato day 2 (p. 60-76) • **Participation Assignment 2 (in class)**
Week 4	Tuesday 2/3	• *VoW:* Aristotle (p. 76-84)

	Thursday 2/5	• Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" [PDF in Canvas] • **Annotation 1 over Lorde (due on Canvas before class)**
UNIT 3: How can I know what is right?		
Week 5	Tuesday 2/10	• *VoW:* Kant (p. 113-120)
	Thursday 2/12	• Kimmerer, "The Gift of Strawberries" [PDF in Canvas] • **Annotation 2 over Kimmerer (due on Canvas before class)**
Week 6	Tuesday 2/17	• *VoW:* Mill (p. 120-129)
	Thursday 2/19	• Writing Workshop for Essay 1 • **Participation Assignment 3 (in class)**
UNIT 4: Is knowledge possible?		
Week 7	Tuesday 2/24	• Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber" [PDF in Canvas] • **Annotation 3 over Nguyen (due on Canvas before class)**
	Thursday 2/26	• *VoW:* Al-Ghazali (p. 314-322)
Week 8	Tuesday 3/3	• *VoW:* Hume (p. 333-341)
	Thursday 3/5	• *VoW:* Koller (p. 351-356) • **Participation Assignment 4 (in class)**
Essay 1 due Friday March 6, 2026 11:59pm Spring Break: March 9-15		
UNIT 4: What makes a just society?		
Week 9	Tuesday 3/17	• *VoW:* Rawls (p. 191-205)
	Thursday 3/19	• *VoW:* MLK (p. 216-226) • **Participation Assignment 5 (in class)**
Week 10	Tuesday 3/24	• *VoW:* Marx and Engels (p. 182-191)

	Thursday 3/26	• Essay 2 introduction - no assigned reading • **Participation Assignment 6 (in class)**
UNIT 5: Is justice possible for all?		
Week 11	Tuesday 3/31	• Whyte, "Too late for indigenous Climate Justice: Ecological and relational tipping points" [PDF in Canvas] • **Annotation 4 over Whyte (due on Canvas before class)**
	Thursday 4/2	• García Hernández, "Invisible Spaces and Invisible Lives in Immigration Detention" Intro and part I (p. 869-880) [PDF in Canvas] • **Participation Assignment 7 (in class)**
Week 12	Tuesday 4/7	• Taylor, "Ableism and Animals" day 1 [PDF in Canvas]
	Thursday 4/9	• Taylor, "Ableism and Animals" day 2 [PDF in Canvas] • **Annotation 5 over Taylor (due on Canvas before class)**
UNIT 7: What is really real?		
Week 13	Tuesday 4/14	• *VoW:* Shankara (p. 443-452) • **Participation Assignment 8 (in class)**
	Thursday 4/16	• *VoW:* Laozi (p. 424-433)
UNIT 8: Who am I? What am I?		
Week 14	Tuesday 4/21	• *VoW:* Buddha (p. 525-528) • **Participation Assignment 9 (in class)**
	Thursday 4/23	• *VoW:* McCloskey (p. 558-562)
Week 15	Tuesday 4/28	• Anzaldúa, "The Homeland, Aztlán" [PDF in Canvas] • **Participation Assignment 10 (in class)**
	Thursday 4/30	• No assigned reading – in class discussion • Essay due tomorrow!

Essay 2 due Friday April 31
Finals Week: May 4-8 (No Class)