

University of North Texas

Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 1050.001 – Summer 2026

Instructor: Xu Tan

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I. 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?

II. 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

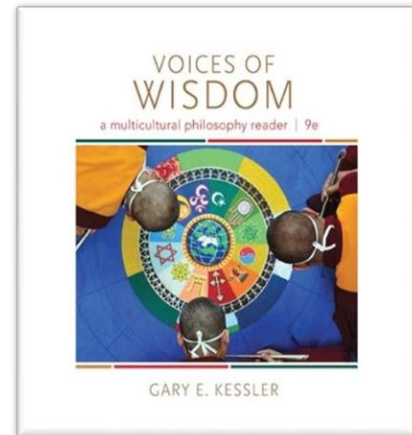
III. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

Since the course will be asynchronous, on-time attendance is not mandatory. However, it is highly recommended to watch the whole video lecture to participate in the quiz/discussion boards and prepare the essay(s).

2. Course readings:

- Required text: Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 9th edition, Cengage Learning, 2016.
- All other course materials will be made available through our Canvas page.



3. Grading/Assessment

Final grades will consist of the following:

Quizzes	60%
2 in-class essays	15%
One final essay	25%

Quizzes: there will be 4 quizzes in total. The quiz consists of few MCQs and True/False questions as well as descriptive question based on readings and lecture.

Essay: 3 essays (2 in-class essays and 1 final essay) comprise 40% of the course grade. Formatting, citation guide for essay writing and the topics of each essay will be posted on CANVAS. You must specify your references when you write the essays to get more detailed feedback and avoid plagiarism. **Essays written through AI or those with Citations without attribution will receive 0 points.**

First Essay Due Date: 24 July 2026

4. Late assignments:

All work is expected to be submitted by the designated due date. Late assignments will be docked 3% for each day late (2 days late: 6% deduction, 3 days late: 9% deduction, etc).

IV. Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to slight change. Any changes will be **announced in class or on **Canvas**. It is your responsibility to obtain the amended schedule provided by the instructor.*

Weeks	Topics and Reading list*	Evaluation Check Points
Week 1	Philosophy – An Introduction Topics: What does ‘Doing Philosophy’ mean? Primary features of philosophy Branches in Philosophy Diverse Philosophical Traditions Readings: VoW [referring to the <i>Voices of Wisdom</i> book] - "What is Philosophy?" (p. 1-6, stop at the heading, “What is Rationality?”) VoW - "Reading Philosophy" (p.12-14)	Quiz 1
Week 2	Metaphysics Topics: History of Metaphysics Monism, Dualism and Pluralism Readings VoW - What is Really Real? (p. 421-426) VoW - Plato (p. 62–76), Platonic dualism (p. 434–436) VoW - Buddha (p. 54–56), The Dao (p. 424–426) VoW - Confucius (p. 58–60)	Quiz 2
Week 3	Epistemology Topics: How do we obtain knowledge Empiricism vs Rationalism debate Readings: VoW - Is Knowledge Possible? (p. 311-314) VoW - Descartes (p. 325-332) VoW - Hume (p. 335 -340) Optional : VoW - Peirce (p. 375-380)	Quiz 3
Week 4	Ethics Topics: Moral Dilemmas Variety of Ethical Theory Readings VoW - Intro (p. 113-115) VoW - Kant (p. 116-120) VoW - Mill (p. 122-129)	Quiz 4

Week 5	Science, Society, & Environment Topics Relationship between Philosophy and Science Philosophy on Social, Politics, and Environmental concerns Readings: VoW - Popper & Kuhn (p. 383-401) VoW - West (p. 239-242) VoW - Singer (p. 261-264) VoW - Mendela (p. 267- 275)	Final Essay
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V. Grading Policies and Procedures

Final course grades will reflect the following scale:

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

VI. Academic Integrity

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:

- use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
- 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
- any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- 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
- 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.

Please note that AI-generated content is not permitted and falls under UNT's definition of "cheating". All papers submitted on Canvas will be run through TurnItIn, which detects both plagiarism and AI-generated language. <https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/turnitin-0>

VII. 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. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

VIII. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation 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 prior to 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 privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

IX. Inclusivity, chosen names, and pronouns

UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The professor is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. In the classroom and online, students are expected to

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal nature

Chosen Names: A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. You can also change your display name in your Canvas account settings.

Pronouns: Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

X. Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work 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 and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

XI. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grown. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go <http://success.unt.edu/>.

XII. Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

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.