

University of North Texas
Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 1050 (online)

Instructor: Xu Tan

Email: xu.tan@unt.edu

Class time: Internet class

Class location: Internet class

Office hours: by appointment (Canvas message or email to schedule)

Office location: ENV 120 or Zoom

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. Format and Procedures:

This is an asynchronous online class. Interaction with me and your fellow students will primarily take place in Canvas. I am available for Zoom or in-person office hours by appointment (please email

or Canvas message me to schedule). There are 14 weeks of content that you will move through. New content will be available weekly.

V. Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation policy:

Participation:

Participation will take place through peer review of written work.

Communication:

Communication regarding course information will be handled through Canvas; be sure to pay attention to Canvas announcements. If you have questions or concerns at any point during the term and wish to contact the instructor, please do so via email (xu.tan@unt.edu) or by coming to office hours. The instructor will do their best to respond within 24 hours Monday – Friday and may not respond on weekends. General questions about course content and assignments can also be referred to the Q & A discussion thread in Canvas.

Emergency communications:

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.

2. Course readings:

- Required text: **Kessler, Gary, *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, 9th edition.**
- Other reading selections will be provided digitally

3. Assignments

Final grades will consist of the following:

Reading Quizzes	25%
Participation (Thinking like a philosopher and peer reviews)	25%
Essay (2 essays: mid-term and final term essay)	50%

V. Grading Policies and Procedures

Grading rubrics will be used to evaluate class participation, assignments, and exam essays.

GRADING SYSTEM:

A	90-100 %
B	80-89 %
C	70-79 %
D	60-69%

F	0-59%
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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.). Late assignments should be emailed to the instructor as soon as they are completed in order to avoid further grade penalty. If a student is absent from a class when an assignment is due, the student must email the assignment to the instructor the same day it is due in order to avoid penalty.

* As with attendance, exceptions will only be made for emergency situations. In all cases, timely communication with your instructor is key.

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.

The use of generative AI is strictly prohibited. Any essay utilizing generative AI tools at any stage in the composition process will receive a zero, even if you have written some of the contents yourself. In cases where there is any doubt, essays will be checked using AI detection software (GPTZero; Originality.AI; etc.), and the analysis of these programs will be treated as decisive.

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.

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. Therefore, a portion of the student's participation grade will reflect their ability 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.

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 grow. 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 Perception 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.

XIII. Important Notice for F-1 Students taking Distance Education Courses

Federal Regulation

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please go to the [Electronic Code of Federal Regulations website](http://www.ecfr.gov/) (<http://www.ecfr.gov/>). The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

University of North Texas Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course.

If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following:

- (1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course.
- (2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose.

Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about his or her need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, s/he should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office (telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu) to get clarification before the one-week deadline.

XIV. Student Verification

UNT takes measures to protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance education courses by verifying student identity, protecting student privacy, and notifying students of any special meeting times/locations or additional charges associated

with student identity verification in distance education courses.

See [UNT Policy 07-002 Student Identity Verification, Privacy, and Notification and Distance Education Courses](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-002>).

XV. Course Schedule

**Please note that the schedule is subject to change; any changes will be announced via Canvas*

Module 1	What is philosophy?	
Week 1	- Kessler, <i>Voices of Wisdom</i> (<i>VoW</i> hereafter): Part One, Unit 1, “What is Philosophy (p. 1-15) - Midgley, “Philosophical Plumbing”	Welcome, introductions
Module 2	How should one live?	
Week 2	<i>VoW</i>, Part Two, unit 3: - Buddha (p. 49-55) - Confucius (p. 56-59)	
Week 3	<i>VoW</i>, Part Two, unit 3: - Plato (p. 60-75) - Aristotle (p. 76-83)	
Module 3	How can I know what is right?	
Week 4	<i>VoW</i>, Part Two, unit 4: - Kant (p. 113-19) - Mill (p. 120-29)	
Week 5	<i>VoW</i>, Part Two, unit 4: - Nussbaum (p. 120-37) - Al-Ash'ari (p. 138-40)	Thinking Like a Philosopher
Module 4	On justice and society	
Week 6	<i>VoW</i>, Part Two, unit 5: - Marx and Engels (p. 184-91) - King (p. 215 – 26)	
Module 6	Is knowledge possible?	

Week 7	• <i>VoW</i>, Part Three, unit 7: • Al-Ghazali (p. 311-22) • Descartes (p. 322-33)	Essay 1 due
Week 8	• <i>VoW</i>, Part Three, unit 8: • Hume (p. 333-41) • Koller (p. 350-55)	
Week 9	• <i>VoW</i>, Part Three, unit 8: • Popper (p. 381-89) • Kuhn (p. 390-401)	Thinking Like a Philosopher
Module 7	What is real and who am I?	
Week 10	• <i>VoW</i>, Part Four, unit 9: • The Dao (p. 421-34) • Plato (p. 434-42)	
Week 11	• <i>VoW</i>, Part Four, unit 11: • Buddha (p. 525-28) • Dennett (p. 530-41)	Thinking Like a Philosopher
Module 8	Philosophy in Practice	
Week 12	• What responsibilities do we owe one another • <i>VoW</i> - West (p. 239-42) • <i>VoW</i> - Williams (p. 250-59) • <i>VoW</i> - Mandela (p. 267-75)	
Week 13	• How should philosophy guide emerging technologies? • Intro. to Environmental Philosophy • <i>VoW</i> - Singer (p. 261-64)	

Week 14	Thanks-Giving break	
Week 15	• How should philosophy guide emerging technologies? • Intro. to AI related ethical issues • The Guardian, "Back from the dead: could AI end grief?"	
Week 16	No new material, final essay	Essay 2 due