

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

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**Office Hours by Appointment**

## **Course Description:**

This course serves as an introduction to Philosophy. Through a selection of readings, lectures and seminar discussions, the course places the practice of philosophizing within historical context and contemporary life. It shows how Philosophy is concerned with both knowledge in general and forms of knowledge in particular as it distinguishes between perception and experience, facthood, common sense, knowledge and belief. By showing how these distinctions work, the course demonstrates the fundamental differences and similarities between experience in general, science, art, ethics and religion. Learning to practice philosophy becomes thereby both a way of understanding the purpose and distribution of knowledge (the humanities, social sciences, and experimental sciences) and a way to situate oneself critically towards society at large.

## **Course Structure and Student Responsibilities:**

The course is organized as a mix of lectures and seminar-like moments. Students are expected to participate fully by taking notes during lectures, carrying out the assessed reading and writing assignments and actively involve in classroom discussions and exercises.

## **Learning Goals:**

Students completing this course will acquire the following skill set:

1. *Philosophical analysis* – Knowledge of key-concepts and their discursive organization to understand theoretical issues.
2. *Reflective orientation* – Use of conceptual analysis to frame issues and build well-informed and well-argued positions.
3. *Historical understanding* – Knowledge of relations between historical sequences in the determination of key-philosophical debates and their concrete fields of application.
4. *Oral expression and clarity* – Ability to speak consistently and lucidly.
5. *Written expression* – Well-organized and well-researched essay-writing.

## **Course Hours:**

The course has 20 class sessions in total. Each class session is 120 minutes in length. The course meets from Monday to Thursday. The course has a total of 40 class hours (4 credit hours).

## **Required Text:**

Robert C. Solomon, *The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Wadsworth Publishing, 2013

**Language:** English

**ISBN-10:** 1133610641

**ISBN-13:** 978-1133610649

### **Course Requirements:**

- Three written examinations : two in-class quizzes (vocabulary definitions and short-answer questions) and one final exam (essay questions). These definitions and essays test the student's ability to understand, formulate, illustrate and discuss key-concepts examined during the course and their meanings.
- A brief oral presentation (10 minutes) explaining and illustrating a topic or concept studied in class and chosen in agreement with the Professor.
- Attendance and participation in all classes.

### **Grading Policy:**

The grades you earn in this course will depend on your performance. The following grading guidelines will be used :

A/A- Excellent; the assignment demonstrates rigorous intellectual engagement, great care and extra effort, clear planning, extensive development and excellent written and/or oral expression. You can also earn an excellent grade when your work shows great creativity and originality.

B+/B Very Good; the assignment reflects mature thought, care and effort. You have gone beyond the basic minimum requirements and have taken the time to think your subject through and to produce a thoughtful, polished piece of writing or a well-rehearsed presentation.

B-/C+ Good. You have submitted an assignment that is complete, well-organized and shows strong potential;

C/C- Satisfactory. You have correctly completed the basic minimum requirements of the assignment;

D+/D Unsatisfactory. The assignment is submitted incomplete;

F Poor. There is little or no evidence of effort to complete the assignment or to improve.

If you would like to dispute any grade in this course, you must do so within one week of receiving the grade (this includes exams).

### **Assessment:**

1. Attendance/Discussion/Participation	15%
2. Quiz # 1	15%
3. Quiz #2	20%
4. Oral Presentation	20%
5. Final Examination	30%

Cell phones, pagers, game devices, etc. must be switched off (not set to vibrate) when you are in class. Computer use should be limited to note-taking. If you will be using your laptop in class, please sit on the left side of the room to reduce distraction to other students.

## **Schedule of Classes and Assignments**

**7/13 Introduction: What is Philosophy? / A Little Logic**

Read Solomon, Introduction and Chapter 1

**7/14 Doing Philosophy: Opening Questions**

Read Plato, *The Apology* (PDF) and Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave* (PDF)

**7/17 The Meaning of Life: What Kind of Meanings?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 2

**7/18 God, Religion, and Philosophy**

Read Solomon, Chapter 3

**7/19 The Nature of Reality: Ideas of Bodies?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 4

**7/20 The Search for Truth: Do We Acquire It Through Our Minds or Through Our Senses?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 5

**7/21 The Self : Who / What Are We?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 6

**7/24 Freedom and Free Will**

Read Solomon, Chapter 7

**\*\*\* Quiz # 1 \*\*\***

**7/25 Morality and the Good Life Part I: From Ancient Wisdoms to Ethics**

Read Solomon, Chapter 8

**Correction of Quiz #1**

**7/26 Morality and the Good Life Part II: From Kant to Nietzsche**

Read Solomon, Chapter 8

**7/27 Justice and the Good Society: What Is the Collective Good?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 9

**7/28 Critical Pause: Review, Discussion, and Oral Presentation Workshop**

**\*\*\* Oral Presentation Outline Due \*\*\* (1 page : title, abstract, corpus, bibliography)**

**7/31 Non-Western Philosophies**

Read Solomon, Chapter 10

**8/1 Beauty: Is It Objective?**

Read Solomon, Chapter 11

**8/2 Writing Philosophy / Using Logic / Avoiding Common Fallacies**

Read Solomon, Appendixes A, B, and C

**\*\*\* Quiz # 2 \*\*\***

**8/3 Philosophy Is All Around Us: The Case of Cinema Part I**

Screening of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Woody Allen (USA, 1989, 104')

**Correction of Quiz #2**

**8/4 Philosophy Is All Around Us: The Case of Cinema Part II**

Read Kant, 'The Moral Law and Autonomy of the Will' (PDF) and Litch, 'Ethics' (PDF)

**8/7 Concluding Remarks and Revisions for Final Exam**

**8/8 Oral Presentations**

**8/9 Final Examination**