

# Philosophy 100 – Introduction to Philosophy

University of Maryland, College Park

Fall Semester, 2018

MW 10–10:50am, F discussions

Tawes Fine Arts Building 1100

## Contact information and office hours

Dr. Jeremy Reid (instructor)

Jwreid@umd.edu

Location: Skinner Building, 1118C

Office hours: Mon 11–1; Wed 11–1

If you are not available during those times, please email me to make an appointment.

Kathleen O’Neal (graduate teaching assistant)

koneal1@umd.edu

Office hours: Mon 1:30–2:45pm

Location: Skinner Building, 1107D

## Course description and learning outcomes

What is philosophy and how do you do it?

On the one hand, philosophy is the systematic exploration of particular topics and questions. This course will give you a sample of these so you can get a sense of the different kinds of things that philosophers discuss. In particular, we’ll cover four topic areas: epistemology (what should we believe and why); ethics (how should we act and what should we do about pressing moral problems); philosophy of religion (is there good evidence for or against the existence of God?); and ancient philosophy (what is happiness and how do we live happy lives?) Not all philosophers find these areas equally captivating, and you’ll probably like some topics more than others – but hopefully you’ll see why these questions are interesting and gain a deeper appreciation of why these debates are complicated. The goal is to understand these debates and to consider your own views in relation to them.

On the other hand, philosophy is a *way* of thinking. Because most philosophical topics do not permit of empirical testing, we have to think hard and carefully about how to solve these problems. Thus philosophers have to be especially *logical, clear, precise, and methodical*. Even if you don’t go on to study more philosophy, in this course you will learn how to approach complex topics through conceptual analysis, presenting the views of others accurately, giving objections and replies concisely. This will help you think more rigorously and write more precisely, particularly about controversial topics.

To get better at doing philosophy is also to get better at thinking, writing, and expressing views (both yours and others').

Sometimes you will find that you don't have good reasons for maintaining the position you thought was right; sometimes you will find that the arguments for what other people believe aren't good arguments; sometimes you won't know what to think. But that's good! We're just getting started here. Most of all, I want you to start thinking more and to start thinking better. This course will set you on that path through a series of topics that I think are especially interesting and important.

## **Electronics policy**

I do not allow electronics in my classroom. They are distracting for you as a student, for other students seeing you looking at memes, and for me. They also drastically reduce your retention of materials, which means *you* do worse when you have electronics (even for taking notes). I would highly recommend taking written notes and sharing them with your classmates.

I do not post my PowerPoint slides. Knowing you can access the material at any time drastically reduces your retention of these materials. Moreover, PowerPoints are not lectures and you need to come to class for what I say in lecture and for the classroom discussion. I am, however, happy to show you the slides again in office hours if you did not get a chance to write everything down or wanted to discuss a particular slide further. I know this will be frustrating at times (it is the thing my students complain about most) – but trust me, you will get more out of the class this way *and you will get a better grade at the end of the semester*.

If you require special accommodations in light of this policy, please come to speak to me and I will do everything I can to make sure that you succeed in this environment.

## **Classroom behavior**

We are going to talk about issues that get people really worked up. Some of these issues are *supposed* to make people angry, indignant, or upset. But we need to learn to disagree about hard topics in a respectful way, talking about *the arguments* and the problems we have with them rather than attacking *the person*. Consequently, I will allow the rational defense of any particular view or position, but I will not tolerate personal attacks or unreasoned grandstanding.

Arriving late and leaving early is rude and very distracting. If you need to leave early, let me know at the start of class and sit by the door.

## Academic integrity

Plagiarism is attempting to pass off somebody else's work as your own. Given that philosophy is in part about learning to think for yourself, I take plagiarism very seriously and am very good at spotting it. In addition, you are graded on the understanding *you* show of the topics we discuss – quoting or paraphrasing someone at length does not show me that *you* understand.

So, if you quote or paraphrase somebody else, cite them. If you don't know how to do this, I can teach you – any standard citation format is fine (e.g. Chicago, APA, MLA). But really, the best thing you can do for this class is to write in your own words. If you plagiarize on a paper or cheat on an exam you will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, who will determine the appropriate penalty for you.

## Assessment

Pop-Quizzes on readings: 10%

Meetings: 10%

Exam One (Mon Sep 17): 10%

Exam Two (Wed Oct 10): 15%

Final Exam (Tue Dec 18; 8am–10am): 20%

Reflection Paper (Mon Oct 29): 10%

Paper One (Mon Nov 12): 10%

Paper Two (Mon Dec 3): 15%

*Twice* during the semester you are to schedule an appointment with me to talk about an upcoming exam or paper. You should come with a question or topic you're struggling with, or a draft of a paper. You get 5% for turning up for the meeting (and actually engaging in discussion). This is my version of extra credit – I will help you get a better grade in the assessment *and* you get 10% of your final grade for free.

If you think that the TA's grading has been unfair, I will re-grade it. My decision will be final, and your grade may go up or down.

Remember:

- You are graded on merit – not on effort.
- Unexplained late assignments and missed exams receive a 0. Take responsibility for your schedule and let me know *in advance* if you have a conflict or know that you will not be able to finish an assignment in time.
- There will be no extra credit or make-up assignments.

- Grades are earned throughout the semester.
- Philosophy is hard and what we talk about is *supposed* to be puzzling. Do the readings multiple times; talk with others in the class; spend time thinking; do not think that you can learn this material quickly at the last minute.
- We like talking about philosophy and want you to get an A, so come say hi!

## Paper Topics

Reflection paper (750-word limit):

*Briefly describe your experience with pets, either with your own or with those of others. Then describe (a) how the readings made you think differently about how people should treat pets, and (b) how you would treat pets differently in the future.*

Paper 1 (750-word limit):

*Present the argument from evil, then present ONE response. Explain whether or not the response is successful.*

Paper 2 (1200-word limit):

*Choosing EITHER the Epicureans OR the Stoics, explain:*

- (A) What they think a happy life is
- (B) How the happy life is achieved, and
- (C) Whether you think their arguments are good or bad

For your assessments, you should not use materials other than those assigned for this course.

I ask that you write in the English dialect, "Academic English." If you are unfamiliar with the sometimes curious idioms of this dialect, I would be more than happy to help you codeswitch.

## Schedule

All readings can be found as pdfs on ELMS under the relevant module (<https://elms.umd.edu/>). Readings and video assignments are to be done *before* class.

*Epistemology: What makes our beliefs rational?*

Mon Aug 27: Introductions

Wed Aug 29: Justification

Watch: "The Epistemic Regress Problem – Epistemology"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAZ8awuILJg>

Mon Sep 3: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Wed Sept 5: Knowledge, Memory, and Skepticism

Watch: "Philosophy - Epistemology: The Problem of Skepticism"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqjdRAERWLC>

Read: Huemer, "The Problem of Memory Knowledge"

Mon Sept 10: Knowledge – Gettier problems

Watch: "Philosophy - Epistemology: Analyzing Knowledge #1 (The Gettier Problem)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lB-XJjmvoE>

Read: Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Wed Sep 12: Peer disagreement

Read: Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence"

**Mon Sep 17: EXAM ONE**

*Ethics: What should we do?*

Wed Sep 19: The basis of ethics – autonomy, freedom, & desire-satisfaction

Read: Mill, *On Liberty* (chapter one; I also highly recommend chapter three)

Mon Sep 24: The basis of ethics – happiness, well-being, & rights

Watch: "Examined Life: Martha Nussbaum"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbcGbflpFzI>

Read: Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* (chapter two, pages 17–45, esp. 33–34)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Wed Sep 26: Punishment: Retribution & Reformation

Read: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Punishment"

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/punishment/>

Mon Oct 1: Punishment: Incapacitation & Deterrence

Watch: "The Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma and the Evolution of Cooperation"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOvAbjfJ0x0>

Wed Oct 3: Poverty

Watch: "Peter Singer: the why and how of effective altruism"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Diuv3XZQXyc>

Read: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Mon Oct 8: Poverty

Read: Risse, "How does the global order harm the poor?"

**Wed Oct 10: EXAM TWO**

Mon Oct 15: Animal Ethics

Read: Pierce, *Run, Spot, Run* (pages 101–112, 136–148, 152–175, and 192–196)

Wed Oct 17: Animal Ethics

Read: Grimm, *Citizen Canine* (pages 248–257)

Winograd, *Welcome Home* (pages 13–26)

Mon Oct 22: The environment

Read: Schmidtz, "Natural Enemies"

Wed Oct 24: Moral problems and our moral energies

Read: Shahar, "Treading Lightly on the Climate in a Problem-Ridden World"

*Philosophy of Religion: The Problem of Evil*

Mon Oct 29: Omnipotence

Watch: "The Problem of Evil: Crash Course Philosophy #13"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AzNEG1GB-k>

Read: Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"

**REFLECTION PAPER DUE**

Wed Oct 31: Responses – Theodicies

Watch: Eleonore Stump, "Vulnerability, Narrative, and Making Sense of Suffering"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl6SOS-iJMc>

Read: Pereboom, "The Problem of Evil" (pages 8–17)

Mon Nov 5: The Evidential Argument for Evil

Watch: Marilyn McCord Adams, "Can Appeals to Free Will Solve the Problem of Evil"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5UNiPoZDsE>

Read: Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism"

Wed Nov 7: Responses – Skeptical Theism

Read: Wykstra, "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments Evil"

**PAPER 1 DUE MON NOV 12**

*Ancient Philosophy: What is happiness?*

Mon Nov 12: Epicureanism

Watch: "Philosophy – History: Epicurus' Cure for Unhappiness"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5f5smh7Keo>

Read: Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus"

Wed Nov 14: Epicureanism

Read: Epicurus, "Principal Doctrines and Vatican Sayings"

Mon Nov 19: Stoicism

Watch: "The philosophy of Stoicism – Massimo Pigliucci"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9OCA6UFE-0>

Wed Nov 21: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Mon Nov 26: Stoicism

Read: Epictetus, *Handbook*

Wed Nov 28: Stoicism

Read: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (excerpts)

**PAPER 2 DUE MON DEC 3**

***Bonus Topic: Protest (or a philosophical issue of your choice!):***

Mon Dec 3: Resistance

Read: Boxill, "Self-Respect and Protest"

Wed Dec 5: Civility

Read: Calhoun, "The Virtue of Civility"

Mon Dec 10:

Course summary and revision session

Tuesday Dec 18:

**FINAL EXAM 8:00-10:00am (same location, but note earlier time!)**