

# PHIL 1000: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

FALL 2022 (online)

## Instructor

Matthew Willis

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## Course Description

What can we know? How should we act? Philosophy considers the answers offered by science, religion, and common sense and tries to push further. If science tells us important truths about cause and effect, philosophy asks: what is it to cause something? If religion tells us to be good, philosophy asks: which acts are good, and why do they count as being good? If common sense says that everything is just a matter of opinion, philosophy asks: is that itself just a matter of opinion, or is it objectively true? This course is a general introduction to philosophy, focusing on some of the most powerful, influential, and surprising arguments philosophers have put forward over the centuries. There are no prerequisites.

## Course Texts

All required texts for this course will be provided through Canvas.

## Course Requirements and Grading

*Weekly Quizzes* (40%) 10 total/40 points each: A quiz will be posted on Canvas most weeks and will be due the following week. These quizzes will be short answer/essay and are intended to help you build your philosophical argumentation and writing.

*Midterm Exam* (25%) 250 points: The midterm exam will consist of several short essay questions covering material up to that date. Students will submit their exams through Canvas in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. Writing a philosophical paper can be difficult – for this reason, notes on how to best structure your responses will be given prior to assigning the midterm.

*Final Exam* (35%) 350 points: The final exam will be a comprehensive exam. The exam will consist of a mix of objective (multiple choice) and subjective questions (short essay questions and some longer form questions).

Letter grades will be assigned as a percentage: 94%+ is an A; 90-93% is an A-, 87%-89% is a B+, 84-86% is a B, 80-83% is a B-, 77-79% is a C+, 74-76% is a C, 70-73% is a C-, 67-69% is a D+, 64-66% is a D, 60-63% is a D-, 59%- is an F.

## Course Policies

**Late Work:** I cannot guarantee that I will be able to accept your late work, thus you should make every effort to complete your work on time. It is best practice, if you miss an assignment, to contact me as soon as possible to increase your chances that we can come to some arrangement. However, if you experience some personal difficulty or have some extenuating circumstance, I will make reasonable efforts to accommodate you.

**Contact:** As this is an asynchronous online class, all communication will be digital. I highly encourage you to utilize my email if you have any questions whatsoever related to the course. I will make every effort to respond to you in a timely manner, though you should not expect immediate responses during the weekend or late at night. When emailing me, it would be immensely helpful if you could include the course name in your subject or message body.

There are no set office hours for this course, but I will announce scheduled Zoom meetings (for the purpose of review) throughout the semester. We may also schedule individual Zoom meetings if you have questions that are not easily addressed through email.

All assignments, readings, course adjustments, etc. will be announced through Canvas. I will also provide you with ample feedback on your assignments for this course through Canvas.

**Academic Integrity:** Do not plagiarize. It is extremely easy to detect, and you expose yourself to great academic risk for very little possible gain. You will not receive credit for submissions containing plagiarism in this course and you may become subject to further sanctions in accord with UC's code of conduct.

The University of Cincinnati's code of conduct will be in effect. Those in violation will fail the course and be subject to applicable penalties from the University. UC's rules are available at the following link: [http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic\\_Integrity.html](http://www.uc.edu/conduct/Academic_Integrity.html).

## **Special Needs and Accommodations**

I want all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed in this course. If you have a disability (visual, hearing, physical, psychological, cognitive, learning, ADD, medical condition, etc.) which may influence your performance in this course, the university will make reasonable accommodations for you to ensure an equitable opportunity to meet all the requirements of this course. If you require accommodations due to disability, please contact Accessibility Resources at 513-556-6823, Campus Location: [Commons Edge North](#). You will be provided an Accommodation Form indicating your accommodation needs for the semester. Please present this form to me as soon as possible to ensure your accommodation needs are discussed, agreed upon, and provided.

Any student requiring accommodation for religious observances should notify the instructor in advance so that adequate accommodation can be provided.

***This syllabus (including the Course Schedule below) may change at the instructor's discretion, though students will be promptly notified of such changes.***

## Course Schedule

Week & Dates	Assignments & Holidays	Topic and (Readings)	Guiding Question
Week 1	Quiz 1	Introduction, Epistemology	What is philosophy?
8/22 – 8/26		(Clifford and James)	How should we behave as thinkers?
Week 2	Quiz 2	Epistemology, continued	What is knowledge?
8/29 – 9/2		(Descartes and Moore)	What can we know?
Week 3	Labor Day (9/5)	Epistemology, conclusion	'What can we know?', concluded.
9/5 – 9/9		(Gettier and Zagzebski)	
Week 4	Quiz 3	Philosophy of Science	How does science inform us about the world?
9/12 – 9/16		(Chakravartty)	
Week 5	Quiz 4	Philosophy of Religion	Can we prove whether God exists?
9/19 – 9/23		(Aquinas and Pascal)	
Week 6	Quiz 5	Ethics	What is morality?
9/26 – 9/30			How should we act?
Week 7	Quiz 6	Applied Ethics	Morality in practice:
10/3 – 10/7		(Thomson, Marquis, and Rachels)	Abortion and Euthanasia
<b><i>Midterm Posted</i></b>			
Week 8	Reading Day (10/10)	Philosophy of Mind	What is the mind?
10/10 – 10/14			
Week 9	Quiz 7	Philosophy of Mind 2	'What is the mind?', concluded.
10/17 – 10/21			
<b><i>Midterm due by October 23rd</i></b>			
Week 10	Quiz 8	Personal Identity	What is the basis of personal identity?
10/24 – 10/28		(Parfit)	
Week 11	Quiz 9	Philosophy of Race and Philosophy of Gender	What are race and gender?
10/31 – 11/3		(Mills and Barnes)	

Week 12 11/7 - 11/11	Reading Day (11/8), Veterans Day (11/11)	Free Will	Do we have free will?
Week 13 11/14 - 11/18	Quiz 10	Meaning of Life	What is the meaning of life?
<i>Final Posted</i>			
Week 14 11/21 - 11/25	Thanksgiving (11/24 -11/25)	Zoom review sessions (times TBA)	
Week 15 11/28 - 12/2		The Value of Philosophy (Russell)	Is philosophy worth doing?
<i>Final due December 5th, 2022.</i>			