

PHIL 101: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

COURSE DESCRIPTION	<p>This course is a general introduction to philosophy. Ideally, such a course would introduce students both to philosophical subject matter and to philosophical method. That is, after taking such a course, students would have a sense for the range of topics that philosophers talk about and a sense for how philosophers talk about those topics. In practice, however, trying to touch on every key philosophical topic makes it difficult to see how philosophical conversations develop. So we will limit ourselves to mainly four representative topics in order to be able to engage in a more rewarding way with each: the problem of evil, our moral obligations to those in need but distant from us, scepticism, and the sorites paradox.</p>
READINGS	<p>Readings will come from a variety of papers and book excerpts. They will be made available either on the course website or as a course packet.</p>
COURSE REQUIREMENTS	<p><i>Attendance and participation:</i> Regular attendance at both lectures and sections is mandatory. You are also expected to contribute to the discussion. The back and forth of discussion is vital to philosophical pursuit and I want you to learn how to engage in it.</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> One of the goals in this class is to cultivate a habit of careful, critical, but charitable reading. There is a vast difference between such reading and mere reading. So make sure to give yourself adequate time to read and reread. The assigned readings may look short to you—do not be misled by that appearance!</p> <p><i>Argument outlines:</i> You will be required to turn in argument outlines based on the readings for that week starting the third week. By then you should have gotten a sense of what I mean by argument outlines from what I will have done in lecture. These outlines will be due weekly except for those weeks in which you have other assignments due. Your lowest two grades on these will be dropped.</p> <p><i>Papers:</i> You will be required to turn in three papers, two of 3–5 pages each and one of 6–10 pages. The longer paper will involve several stages. You will select from a list of topics and then I will divide you into groups based on the topics you chose. After you have completed your papers, they will be circulated within your group for review by your peers. In response to those comments, you will revise your papers and then turn them in both your original version and the revised version. Either I or your section leaders will provide another set of comments which you will then use for another round of revision before turning in your final versions. Your grade for the final paper will be based on the following factors: the quality of your comments on your peers' papers, the quality of your second draft, the quality of your final draft, and how well you responded to criticisms on your earlier drafts.</p>
GRADING	<p>Attendance and participation — 10% Argument outlines — 20% Shorter essay 1 — 15% Shorter essay 2 — 15% Longer essay — 40%</p> <p>In addition, note the following constraint: an F in any of the parts listed above will result in an F for the course. Solution: don't blow off any part of the course.</p>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE	Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments
	Week 1	Philosophy and argumentation	
	Week 2	Problem of Evil	Mackie, 'Evil and Omnipotence' (excerpt); Plantinga, <i>God, Freedom, and Evil</i> (excerpt)
	Week 3		Rowe, 'The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism'; Wykstra, 'The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering' (excerpt)
	Week 4		Ekstrom, 'Suffering as Religious Experience'
	Week 5	Tolerance and moral relativism	Carson, 'Moral Relativism' Shorter essay 1
	Week 6	Moral obligations to distant needy	Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'
	Week 7		Arthur, 'Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code'
	Week 8		Miller, 'Beneficence, Duty, and Distance' Shorter essay 2
	Week 9		Unger, <i>Living High and Letting Die</i> (excerpts)
	Week 10	Sorites paradox	Galen, <i>On Medical Experience</i> (excerpt); Unger, 'There Are No Ordinary Objects' (excerpt)
	Week 11		Cargile, 'The Sorites Paradox'
	Week 12		Mehlberg, 'Truth and Vagueness' First draft of longer essay
	Week 13	Scepticism	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (excerpt)
	Week 14		Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> (excerpt) Revised draft of longer essay
	Week 15		Salmon, <i>The Foundations of Scientific Inference</i> (excerpt) Final version of longer essay