

# PHILOS 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Eric Wilkinson  
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Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00  
Office Hours: By Appointment

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## Course Description:

This course introduces students to philosophical modes of thinking and methods of inquiry through consideration of traditional philosophical subjects. Philosophy is often thought to offer a means of acquiring knowledge about subjects where empirical methods are not applicable or are inadequate. In this course we shall consider debates in epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics where empirical methodologies prove indecisive. In particular, we will begin by asking how the epistemic concepts of truth, justified belief, and *a priori* knowledge should be understood. Next, we will examine the metaphysical debates over whether existence is only material or includes some non-natural entities. Finally, we will discuss arguments in moral philosophy related to free will, moral skepticism, and ethical objectivity. Upon completing this class, students will have developed their analytical skills, including the ability to parse difficult texts, analyze philosophical concepts, and to write precisely.

## Assessment & Grading:

<i>Assignment:</i>	<i>Due Date:</i>	<i>Weight:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
Reading Responses	Weekly	10%	Weekly reading responses of about 250 words.
Midterm	October 10 <sup>th</sup>	20%	A midterm exam of short-answer questions.
Short Paper	November 7 <sup>th</sup>	30%	A 5-page, double-spaced argumentative paper.
Final Exam	December 15 <sup>th</sup>	40%	An exam of short and long answer questions.

**Communication Policy:** Before emailing, please consult the syllabus for an answer to your query. When emailing, use your university email address and allow at least 48 hours to receive a response.

**Late Policy & Extensions:** The penalty for late assignment submission is five percent (5%) a day. Extensions will be assessed individually and granted mainly for medical reasons or bereavement.

**Disability Accommodations:** Those who require disability accommodations must register with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC). ARC will assist students in determining their needs and will help to communicate the accommodations for registered students to the course instructor.

**Academic Integrity:** The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee values academic integrity. Thus, students should understand the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences.

Course Schedule  
September 5<sup>th</sup> – December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Lecture Topic:</b>	<b>Required Readings:</b>	<b>Supplemental Readings:</b>
September 5 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction	• Course Syllabus	• No Readings
September 10 <sup>th</sup>	What is Truth?	• “Theories of Truth” (Robert Audi)	• “Classical Theories of Truth” (Pascal Engel)
September 12 <sup>th</sup>			
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Knowledge and Justified Belief	• “A Sketch of the Sources and Nature of Belief, Justification, and Knowledge” (Robert Audi)	• <i>Theaetetus</i> , 201d-210d (Plato)
September 19 <sup>th</sup>			
September 24 <sup>th</sup>	Thought-Experiments and <i>A Priori</i> Reasoning	• “Doing Thought Experiments” (Timothy Williamson)	• “Our Most Curious Device” (Roy Sorensen)
September 26 <sup>th</sup>			
October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Validity, Soundness, and Logical Consequence	• “The Power of Logic: Logical Consequence” (Stephen Read)	• “Truth, Pure and Simple: Language and the World” (Stephen Read)
October 3 <sup>rd</sup>			
October 8 <sup>th</sup>	Material and Non-Material Existence	• “Materialism” & “Berkeley’s Critique of Materialism” (C.H. Whitely)	• “Epiphenomenal Qualia” (Frank Jackson)
October 10 <sup>th</sup>			
October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Metaphysics of the Mind	• “Cartesian Dualism” (John Heil)	• “Mind as Immaterial Substance” (Jaegwon Kim)
October 17 <sup>th</sup>			
October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Free Will and Determinism	• “The Free Will Problem” (Thomas Pink)	• “Freedom as Free Will” (Thomas Pink)
October 24 <sup>th</sup>			
October 29 <sup>th</sup>	The Status of Morality	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 1, Chapters 1-2 (Russ Shafer-Landau)	• “Enquiry I” (Catherine Wilson)
October 31 <sup>st</sup>			

November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Moral Error, Moral Equivalence, Dogmatism, and Progress	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 2, Chapters 1-4 (Russ Shafer-Landau)	• “Enquiry II” (Catherine Wilson)
November 7 <sup>th</sup>			
November 12 <sup>th</sup>	Moral Relativism	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 2, Chapters 5-9 (Russ Shafer-Landau)	• “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (James Rachels)
November 14 <sup>th</sup>			
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Ethical Objectivism	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 3, Chapters 1-4 (Russ Shafer-Landau)	• “Enquiry IX” (Catherine Wilson)
November 21 <sup>st</sup>			
November 26 <sup>th</sup>	Fall Recess – No Lecture	• No Readings	• No Readings
November 28 <sup>th</sup>			
December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Moral Standards	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 3, Chapters 5-6 & 9 (Russ Shafer-Landau)	• <i>Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?</i> – Part 3, Chapters 7-8 (Russ Shafer-Landau)
December 5 <sup>th</sup>			
December 10 <sup>th</sup>	Review	• No Readings	• No Readings
December 12 <sup>th</sup>			

### Remote Delivery:

This is an asynchronous online course. Therefore, there is no in-person instruction or assessments. Each week, the lectures are posted to the course website on Tuesdays and Thursdays by 10:00am. All readings are also available on the course website; the reading schedule is found in this syllabus.

### Reading Responses:

Beginning in the second week of the course (September 10<sup>th</sup>), students must post a weekly reading response on Canvas on its Discussion Board. The reading responses can take the form of questions, comments, or counter-arguments to the readings, but must illustrate engagement with the material.