INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: CENTRAL PROBLEMS, GREAT MINDS, BIG IDEAS

PHIL 101-002. Fall, 2023

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

COURSE INFORMATION

Credit Hours: 3

Pre or Co-Requisites: N/A

Target Audience: This course is intended as a first course in philosophy for undergraduates

Meeting Pattern: MW: 03:35 PM-04:50 PM

Instructional Format: In Person

Classroom or Location: Murphey - Rm 0104

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Rory Hanlon (he/him/his)

UNC Email Address: rhanlon@unc.edu

Office Location: Caldwell 112c

Office Hours, including mode: Mondays, 10am-12pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2pm-3pm (all in person, in office).

COURSE CONTENT

Course Description

This course serves as a general introduction to the field of philosophy. Accordingly, our central question will be what makes philosophical ideas, questions, arguments, or problems *philosophical*? What does it mean to think *philosophically* about some issue? What unique promises and obstacles does philosophy present? Most simply, what is philosophy? To reflect on these questions, we will examine central philosophical topics, both in historical and contemporary texts: e.g., the relationship between the mind and the body, the legitimacy of political authority, the nature of a meaningful life (and death), whether our beliefs can be held with certainty. We will also examine applications of these topics to contemporary problems: e.g., our duties to nonhuman animals, the possibility of artificial consciousness, the limits of natural science, and the effect of technology on our ethical and social lives.

Course Texts & Materials

The required textbook for the course is *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition, ed. Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, Elizabeth Harman, and Seana Schiffrin. This will be available through UNC Student Stores. Do note

that this is an anthology, which contains both selections from primary material and additional content (questions, etc.). All other readings will be made available on Canvas (which will be underlined in the reading schedule).

Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

All our philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophic skills. One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge.

These **basic philosophical skills** involve being able to:
- Think critically;
- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness;
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic;
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting;
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis;
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions;
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions presented them."

IDEAs in Action General Education Curriculum

This course is part of the IDEAs in Acon General Education curriculum, and satisfies either the FC-KNOWING or the FC-VALUES focus capacity.

[FC-KNOWING]
Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Recognize and use one or more approach/es to developing and validating knowledge of the unfamiliar world.
2. Evaluate ways that temporal, spatial, scientific, and philosophical categories structure knowledge.
3. Interrogate assumptions that underlie our own perceptions of the world.
4. Employ strategies to mitigate or adjust for preconceptions and biases.
5. Apply critical insights to understand patterns of experience and belief.

   Questions for Students:
   1. What norms and expectations do I take for granted?
   2. What categories and concepts frame my assumptions, experiences, and beliefs?
   3. What practices of investigation or inquiry best challenge those assumptions and expectations?
   4. How can I consider whether my beliefs might be wrong?

[FC-VALUE]

Student Learning Outcomes:.
1. Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
2. Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered.
3. Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.
4. Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.

   Questions for Students:
   1. How can people think fruitfully, individually and together, about how they should live their lives?
   2. What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?

3. How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?
4. What considerations—stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, et cetera—can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?

Recurring Capacities

Every focus capacity course includes the following activities:

- **Writing**, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent
- **Presenting** material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means
- **Collaborating** in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research

These elements – referred to as "recurring capacities" – will help you repeatedly practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success."

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENTS

Expected Time Dedicated to the Class

A typical week will require 10 hours of work (though this will vary depending on assignments and time during the term). This includes both active participation in class, as well as reading and other work assigned outside of class (e.g., papers).

Assignment Descriptions

Class Participation

Regular attendance is required for every class meeting. In cases of illness, emergencies, or other excused absences, you are expected to notify me via email in advance.

Participation is graded on contributions to class and small group discussions/collaborative activities, both in terms of quantity and quality. If you are concerned or are finding it difficult to speak in class (for any reason), please do let me know. You are also encouraged to come to office hours: questions and conversations in office hours will also count towards participation.

Canvas Posting

Biweekly reading responses, in which you pose a philosophical question or observation (e.g., an objection, an implication) you have about the reading for that class. These are meant to be low-stakes and are not graded (beyond them being submitted). Think of them like brief diary entries for each reading in which you note what you find interesting or confusing; you should aim for around a paragraph for each post. Each class, I will pick someone to formulate their question to the class and describe why they find it interesting.

Collaborative Presentations

Most weeks throughout the term, one group (consisting of 3 or more students) will give an original oral presentation to the class and answer subsequent questions. Your group is expected to formulate clearly a question related to recent readings, and argue for/against a conclusion in response. Your group must propose a topic (question-claim pair) a week before the presentation. We will go over details of the assignment in more detail.

Papers

Paper prompts will be published on Canvas, under Assignments. You will submit papers through Canvas on the specified due dates listed on the syllabus. Papers should be formatted in double-spaced size 12 font, with default margins, and uploaded in Word (.doc) format. All papers are graded anonymously to ensure fairness, so please do NOT put your name in the document or anywhere in the file. Identify yourself within the document by your PID instead. Assigned papers in this course total 10 pages, at minimum.

Exam

You will have a final, open-book exam that consists of an in-class essay to prompts concerning material explored throughout the quarter. The central aim of this exam will be to try to reflect on the *connections* between different areas of philosophy that we've covered throughout the term.

Assignment/Assessment	Final Grade (%)
Class Participation	20%
Paper #1, due 9/29, 3-4 paper	15%
Paper #2, due 10/27, 6-8 pages paper	20%
Collaborative Presentations	20%
Canvas Posts (paragraph, 2x per week)	5%
Final Exam, 12/14 at 4:00pm	20%

Grading Scale & Schema

Late Work

You will be given one "free" late day, to be used the first time your assignment is late. Once your free late day has been used, late papers will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each calendar day (or part of a day) that they are late. Reasonable requests for extensions will only be considered if they are made **at least three days in advance** of the paper due date.

Grading Scale

Numeric Grade (%)	Letter Grade
93.5 and above	A
89.5 – 93.4	A-
86.5 – 89.4	B+
82.5 – 86.4	B
79.5 – 82.4	B-
76.5 – 79.4	C+
72.5 – 76.4	C
69.5 – 72.4	C-
66.5 – 69.4	D+
59.5 – 66.4	D
59.4 and below	F

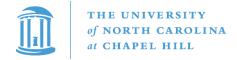*Table b: Grading Scale Table*

COURSE SCHEDULE

All underlined readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas. All other readings are from the required Norton Introduction to Philosophy. Readings from the anthology include not just the selections included, but also the editor's additional materials that follow the selections (e.g., "Test Your Understanding"). Also, note that the readings from the anthology are *selections*; if you try to read the original texts from which the selections are made, you will end up doing a lot more than the assigned reading!

Schedule

	Topics	Required Reading
8/21	General Introduction, Discussion of Class Structure	N/A
8/23	Philosophical Methods and Scope: An Initial Picture	"Why Philosophy? Five Views"; "A Brief Guide to Logic and Argumentation", Byrne et al (THESE ARE LOCATED IN THE ANTHOLOGY JUST AFTER THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, IN THE SECTION ENTITLED "GETTING STARTED)
9/4	Labor Day (no classes)	*N/A*
9/6	Is Philosophy a Discipline, Body of Knowledge, or a Lifestyle?	"Philosophy as a way of life", Hadot
9/11	What Is Knowledge?	*Meno*, Plato; "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", Gettier;
9/18	How Can We Know about What We Have Not Observed?	*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume; "The New Riddle of Induction," Goodman;
9/20	Are Things as they Appear? Historical Approaches	*Twenty Verses* with Auto-Commentary, Vasubandhu; "Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous", Berkeley;
9/27	Are Things as they Appear? Contemporary Approaches	"Appearance and Reality", Russell; "Are we Living in a Computer Simulation?", Bostrom
(Canceled Reading)	What is There?	**Optional Reading:** "A Thing and Its Matter", Yablo; "There Are No Ordinary Things", Unger
9/25	Well-being Day (no class)	*N/A*
10/5		First Paper (4-6 pages) due by 11:59pm on Canvas
10/2	Is it Reasonable to Believe without Evidence?	*Pensees,* Pascal; "The Will to Believe", James
10/4	Is the Mind Material?	*Meditation* (2), Descartes; "Correspondence with Descartes", Elisabeth; "Descartes' Myth", Ryle
10/9	What is Consciousness?	"What is it like to be a Bat?", Nagel; "Epiphenomenal Qualia", Jackson; "The Hard Problem of Consciousness", Chalmers
10/11	Can Non-Humans be Conscious?	"Minds, Brains and Programs", Searle
10/16	How Can You Know Other Minds?	"The Argument from Analogy", Russell; "Wittgenstein and Other Minds", Kripke
10/18	What is Personal Identity?	"Of Identity and Diversity", Locke; "The Dualist Theory", Swinburne; "Personal Identity", Parfit
10/23	Further Questions of Identity: What are Gender and Race?	"Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?", Haslanger; "The Metaphysics of Gender", Barnes

10/25	Do We Possess Free Will? Metaphysical Problems	"Free Will", G. Strawson; "Freedom and Necessity", Ayer
10/30	Do We Possess Free Will? Ethical Problems	"Freedom and Resentment", P.F. Strawson; "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility", Wolf
10/27		Second paper (6-8 pages) due on Canvas at 11:59pm.
11/1	Is Morality Objective?	"The Subjectivity of Values", Mackie; "Is It Reasonable to Rely on Intuitions in Ethics?", Harman; "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?", Street
11/6	Why do What is Right?	*The Republic*, Plato; "Why Ought we Do What is Right", Thomson;
11/8	Which Moral Theory Is Correct?	*Utilitarianism*, Mill
11/13	Which Moral Theory Is Correct?	*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant
11/15	Which Moral Theory Is Correct?	*Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle
11/20	Animal Ethics	"The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death," Harman; "Eating Meat and Eating People", Diamond
11/22	Thanksgiving (No Class)	*N/A*
11/27	Global Inequality	"Famine, Affluence, and Morality", Singer; "Political Equality", Nussbaum
(Canceled Reading)	How Can the State Be Justified?	**OPTIONAL READING:** *Leviathan*, Hobbes; *The Social Contract*, Rousseau
11/29	What is the Meaning of Life?	"Meaning in Life and Why it Matters", Wolf; "The Absurd", Nagel
12/4	What is the Meaning of Death?	"Death and the Afterlife", Scheffler; "The Makropulos case", Williams
12/14	Final Exam (4:00pm)	Final Exam

POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Policies

University Class Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's Class Attendance Policy, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:
1. Authorized University activities: University Approved Absence Office (UAAO) website provides information and FAQs for students and FAQs for faculty related to University Approved Absences
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview, illness/ flu or club activity), instructors are

encouraged to work directly with students to determine the best approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

Honor Code Statement

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me, or consult studentconduct.unc.edu.

Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the Safe Computing at UNC website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Data Security & Privacy

UNC-Chapel Hill Privacy Statement: Sakai's Discussion Forum, Assignments, DropBox, Gradebook, and Tests & Quizzes tools are designed to share FERPA-protected information privately between instructors and individual students.

Grade Appeal Process

If you have any concerns with grading and/or feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our director of undergraduate studies or department chair.

Services & Student Support Policies

Accessibility Resources & Services (ARS)

Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS – ars@unc.edu) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities. ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations. Faculty and instructors with any concerns or questions about accommodations and/or their implementation, are invited to reach out to ARS to discuss.

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/ or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator

(Elizabeth Hall, titleixcoordinator@unc.edu) or the Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu). Confidential resources include Counseling and Psychological Services and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu). Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email reportandresponse@unc.edu or see additional contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate any suggestions.

Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/.

Learning Center

Want to get the most out of this course or others this semester? Visit UNC's Learning Center at http://learningcenter.unc.edu to make an appointment or register for an event. Their free, popular programs will help you optimize your academic performance. Try academic coaching, peer tutoring, STEM support, ADHD/LD services, workshops and study camps, or review tips and tools available on the website.

Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's Writing Center. Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit http://writingcenter.unc.edu.