



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2017

PH1600 (A2): Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary Issues - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Tina Strasbourg **PHONE:** 780-539-2237
OFFICE: C408 **E-MAIL:** tstrasbourg@gprc.ab.ca
OFFICE HOURS: Monday/Wednesday 11:30 to 12:30
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30 to 3:30

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

Philosophical analysis of contemporary problems of social concern. Topics may include abortion, sexual equality, our place in the natural environment, censorship, minority and majority rights, war and violence, medical ethics and cultural preservation.

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: None

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

James Rachels and Stuart Rachels. *Problems from Philosophy*, 3rd edition. New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2012.

Resource Materials links posted on Moodle.

DELIVERY MODE (S): Lectures and discussions

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To gain an understanding of important problems in philosophy.
2. To develop critical thinking and problem solving skills through the analysis of philosophical topics.

3. To examine individual and social assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and understandings of phenomena in the world.
4. To gain an understanding of abstract philosophical concepts.
5. To enhance awareness and increase understanding of the nature of the world.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The learning outcomes stressed in this course are Communication Skills, Thinking Skills and Ethical Reasoning.

1. Students will use **Communication Skills** in

- Communicating clearly and concisely employing written and verbal skills appropriate to class assignments and discussion
- Demonstrating interpersonal skills by listening effectively, establishing rapport, monitoring non-verbal signals
- Expressing awareness of, and respect for self and others
- See section on Philosophical Etiquette for a further description

2. Students will use **Thinking Skills** in

- Analyzing theoretical concepts and examining the connections between them
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories

3. Students will use **Philosophical Reasoning** in

- Applying philosophical reasoning to practical situations
- Recognizing and examining multiple perspectives
- Analyzing and discussing issues from an philosophical perspective

TRANSFERABILITY: UA, UC, UL, AU, AF, CU, CUC, KUC, Other

***Warning:** Although we strive to make the transferability information in this document up-to-date and accurate, **the student has the final responsibility for ensuring the transferability of this course to Alberta Colleges and Universities.** Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferralberta.ca> or, if you do not want to navigate through few links, at <http://alis.alberta.ca/ps/tsp/ta/tbi/onlineSearch.html?SearchMode=S&step=2>

**** Grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.**

EVALUATIONS:

Class Participation	10%
Two Critical Comment Essays	20% each = 40%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

Class Participation: Participation in discussion is a way to help advance the discussion of difficult philosophical concepts and encourage others. More particularly, discussion helps to enhance one’s understanding of philosophical concepts, and offers a venue for critical analysis of your own arguments.

Two Critical Comments: Students will choose topics for critical comments from readings on Moodle. **Essays are due in class the week after the reading is covered in class (see course schedule for dates).**

1. Each essay should be 2 to 3 pages in length, double-spaced with one-inch margins. Your essay will be a short philosophical discussion and critique of one of the assigned topics. **Do not summarize the text.**
2. Your essay should have a clear, concise thesis statement. Think of a thesis statement as the conclusion for which you will build an argument in your critical essay. You will be deducted marks for not including a thesis statement.
3. You will be expected to use grammar, punctuation, and spelling appropriate for a university level course.
4. You will be deducted marks if your essay does not reference at least one academic article from the course material.
5. Use whichever citation style with which you are comfortable (just use it consistently and correctly). You will be deducted marks for incorrect citations.

In-class midterm exam: October 10th

Students should be prepared to answer questions from material covered in class, which includes lectures, in-class discussion and course readings. It is therefore to students’ advantage to attend every class.

Final exam: TBA

The registered final exam will have a format similar to the mid-term. Students will have 3 hours to write the final exam. Please check the registrar’s posting for a schedule of final examinations.

Alternative arrangements for writing a missed exam may be made at the discretion of the instructor. Deferrals may only be granted in extenuating circumstances such as extreme illness or other serious circumstances beyond the student’s control. Work commitments, holidays or traffic are not considered legitimate reasons for missing an exam.

Note: Unless previously discussed, I will not accept email assignments. I will count these as late until I receive a hard copy. Late work will be penalized in the absence of a valid excuse. The assignment grade will be reduced by 10% each day it is overdue.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most universities will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines		Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	90-100		C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-89		C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84		C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79		D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72		F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE: This is a tentative schedule only. It is appropriate and acceptable for unanticipated related philosophical discussions to arise. As such, it is may be the case that we will fall behind schedule and some thing(s) will have to be moved or dropped.

Week 1: August 31st

Administrative

Week 2: September 5th and 7th

Introduction to Philosophy

Rachels, (Appendix) “How to Evaluate Arguments”

How to Write a Philosophy Paper

Week 3: September 12th and 14th

Rachels, Chapter 2—“God and the Origin of the Universe”

St. Thomas Aquinas, “The Existence of God”--Moodle

Week 4: September 19th and 21st: St. Thomas Aquinas Critical Comment Due

Rachels, Chapter 3—“The Problem of Evil”

B.C. Johnson, “God and the Problem of Evil”—Moodle

Week 5: September 26th and 28th: B.C. Johnson Critical Comment Due

Rachels, Chapter 5—“The Problem of Personal Identity”

Rachels, Chapter 6—“Body and Mind”

Week 6: October 3rd and 5th

Daniel C. Dennett, “Where Am I?”—Moodle

Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”—Moodle

Week 7: October 10th and 12th

In class Midterm—October 10th

Rachels, finish Chapter 6—section on “A Third Theory Functionalism”

Rachels, Chapter 7—“Could a Machine Think?”

Week 8: October 17th and 19th: Dennett or Nagel Critical Comment Due

Review Midterm exam

John R. Serle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”—Moodle

Week 9: October 24th and 26th: John R. Searle Critical Comment Due

Rachels, Chapter 8—“The Case Against Free Will”

Rachels, Chapter 9—“The Debate Over Free Will”

Week 10: October 31st and November 2nd

Rachels, finish Chapter 9—section on “The Compatibilist Response”

W.T. Stace, “Compatibilism Defended”

Rachels, Chapter 10—“Our Knowledge of the World Around Us”

Week 11: November 7th and 9th: W.T. Stace Critical Comment Due

Rachels, Chapter 11—“Ethics and Objectivity”

Week 12: November 14th and 16th

Rachels, Chapter 12, “Why Should We be Moral?”

Week 13: November 21st and 23rd

James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, "The Debate over Utilitarianism" — Moodle

Week 14: November 28th and 30th: James and Stuart Rachels Critical Comment Due

Lewis Vaughn, "War, Terrorism, and Torture"

Michael Walzer, "Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses"

Week 15: December 5th and 7th: Walzer and Viminiz Critical Comment Due

Paul Viminiz, "A Defence of Terrorism"

Review Final Exam

Important: The presumption will be that you have completed the readings **before** class on the day they are assigned.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Regular attendance and participation in discussion is expected. Participation is a way to help advance the discussion, gain understanding of course material and encourage others.
2. Please do not be late for class.
3. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class. Do not fall behind in the assigned readings because it is difficult to catch up.
4. If students miss class, it is their responsibility to obtain lecture material and the reading assignment.
5. Policies regarding final exams are governed by college-wide policy. Students should consult the Examinations policy in the GPRC Calendar. In particular, student should consult the GPRC Calendar for any questions regarding deferred exams, but note that students are required to be available to write exams during the entire final exam period.

Refer to the College Policy on Student Rights and Responsibilities at

<https://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/>

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and there will be penalties. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, refer to the Student Conduct section of the College Calendar at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at <https://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies>

Instructors reserve the right to use electronic plagiarism detection services on written assignments. **Instructors also reserve the right to ban the use of any form of electronics (cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, tablets, scanning pens, electronic dictionaries, etc.) during class and during exams.**

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

Additional Information:

Philosophical Etiquette

Contrary to popular belief philosophy is not a blood sport. A philosophical discussion should not be thought of as an opportunity to participate in arguments that are meant to crush one's opponent. Rather it is an opportunity, first and foremost, to gain an understanding of philosophical concepts. Second, it should inspire critical analysis of philosophical concepts. And finally, it should facilitate fruitful discussion. I expect all students to show good philosophical etiquette, which is to exhibit mutual respect for each other's ideas and comments and that people not be *purposefully* offensive.

Pet Peeves

Cell phones that ring during class or use of cell phones during class. The sound of binders closing and people packing-up books before I've indicated that the class is over. Trying to talk over people who are discussing their weekend plans during class time. Unstapled assignments. Use of laptops or other electronic devices that disrupts other students.