

**COURSE OUTLINE - Winter 2025**

**PH1020(A3/VC): Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks**

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR:	Hugh Hunter	PHONE:	(780) 539-2823
OFFICE:	C421	E-MAIL:	jhunter@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS:	Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM, or by request		

**CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:** This is an introduction to the classical problems of philosophy through study and critical discussion of selected philosophical classics and contemporary works. Emphasis will be placed on questions of the nature and extent of human knowledge and classic problems about the nature of reality and our place in it.

**PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE:** None

**REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:**

*Note on books: We will be reading small parts of each of these five books. The Syllabus contains hyperlinks to take you directly to each reading. All these textbooks are free and open source. You can access only the readings you need through hyperlinks, or if you want the books can be downloaded for you to keep. In some cases, paper copies may also be purchased from the publisher for a small fee if you want a paper copy, but you don't need one for this course.*

- [Introduction to Philosophy](#), Nathan Smith (OpenStax, 2024) [IP]
- [The Originals: Classic Readings in Western Philosophy](#), Jeff McLaughlin (PressBooks, 2017) [TO]
- [Modern Philosophy](#), Walter Ott and Alex Dunn (PressBooks, 2013) [MP]
- [Reading for Philosophical Inquiry: A Brief Introduction to Philosophical Thinking](#), Lee Archie, John G. Archie (2004) [RPI]
- [Philosophical Thought Across Cultures and Through the Ages](#), Heather Wilburn (PressBooks, 2020) [PT]

**DELIVERY MODE(S):**

On-Campus for students enrolled in section A2.

Synchronous for students enrolled in section VC.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

Students will use **Communication Skills** in

- Communicating clearly and concisely while employing written and verbal skills appropriate to class assignments and discussion.
- Developing written arguments with strong logical inferences to show support for your claims.
- Demonstrating interpersonal skills by listening effectively, establishing rapport, and monitoring non-verbal signals.
- Expressing awareness of and respect for self and others.

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

- To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the analysis of philosophical topics.
- Learning how to understand and charitably interpret others' arguments and developing the ability to rearticulate arguments in a philosophical form.
- Analyzing theoretical concepts and examining the connections between them.
- Developing written arguments with strong logical inferences to show support for your claims.
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories.
- See section on What we do in Philosophy for more.

3. Students will use **Diverse Reasoning Skills** in

- To gain an understanding of important problems in philosophy.
- Applying philosophical reasoning to varied views.
- Recognizing and examining conflicting views on philosophical issues.
- Analyzing and discussing issues from a multitude of perspectives.
- Examining individual and social assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and understandings of phenomena in the world.
- Gaining an understanding of abstract philosophical concepts.
- Enhancing awareness and increasing understanding of the nature of the world.

## TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.ca>

\*\* 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:

50% Comprehension Quizzes x 5 (10% each) (January 24, February 3, March 3, March 13, March 28)

20% Midterm Exam – February 14

20% Final Exam – Date TBD

10% Participation

- Note: The final exam schedule will be released by the school. It is your responsibility to review this schedule and arrive at the final exam as scheduled.
- Note: the participation grade is based on your active participation in class discussion. You don't have to attend every single class or talk in every single class to get a good participation grade, but you should be a regular contributor.

**Expected Statutory Holidays and Breaks: (no class on these days)**

- Family Day: February 17
- Spring Break: February 18-21

**GRADING CRITERIA:**

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

**Grading Chart**

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	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:**

Date	Subject	Reading	Assignments
January 6	What are metaphysics and epistemology?		
January 10	Why do Philosophy?	<a href="#">Bertrand Russell – On the Value of Philosophy</a> [TO]	
January 13	What Exists?	<a href="#">Plato – On the Allegory of the Cave</a> [TO]	
January 17			
January 20		<a href="#">Aristotle's Physics</a> [MP]	
January 24		<a href="#">Substance</a> [IP]	Quiz 1 (January 24)
January 27	Are we Free?	<a href="#">Aristotle on Freedom and the Sea Battle</a>	
January 31		<a href="#">Free Will</a> [IP]	
February 3	Does God Exist?	<a href="#">William Paley – On The Teleological Argument</a> [TO]	Quiz 2 (February 3)
February 7		<a href="#">St. Thomas Aquinas – On the Five Ways to Prove God's Existence</a> [TO]	
February 14	Mid Term Exam		Mid Term Exam

February 17	FAMILY DAY		
February 21	WINTER BREAK		
February 24	The Problem of Evil	<a href="#">Cosmology and the Existence of God</a> [IP]	
February 28	What makes you, you?	<a href="#">John Locke on Personal Identity</a> [PI]	
March 3			Quiz 3 (March 3)
March 7	What can we be certain about?	<a href="#">Rene Descartes – On Doubt and Certainty</a> [TO]	
March 10			
March 14	What is Knowledge?	<a href="#">John Locke – On the Foundation of Knowledge</a> [TO]	
March 17			Quiz 4 (March 13)
March 21		<a href="#">Knowledge</a> [IP]	
March 24		<a href="#">Justification</a> [IP]	
March 28			Quiz 5 (March 28)
March 31	What can we actually know?	<a href="#">David Hume – On Empiricism</a> [TO]	
April 4			
April 7		<a href="#">Skepticism</a> [IP]	
April 11		Review	

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Responsibilities of all students:

1. Please do not be late for class.
2. You are expected to complete assigned readings before class. Do not fall behind in the assigned readings because it is difficult to catch up.
3. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain the information you missed.
4. Policies regarding final exams are governed by institutional policy. You should consult the Examinations policy in the NWP Calendar. You should consult the NWP 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.
5. Exam and assignment 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 forgetfulness are not considered legitimate reasons for missing assigned deadlines.
6. In cases where submitted work exhibits concerning patterns or raises questions for the instructor about its creation and the student's intellectual effort involved, students may be required to submit to an oral examination regarding the work at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to participate in the oral examination will result in an assigned grade of 0 for the assessment. If, following the oral examination, the instructor still has concerns about the work, the academic misconduct provisions of the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) policy may be applied.
7. You are adults. Please treat class as you would any professional setting. That means governing your actions so as not to disrupt the class.
  - a. Feel free to use your technology discretely so long as it does not distract others.

- b. If you need to take a call, leave to use the bathroom or leave early, do it quietly so as not to disrupt the class on the way out.
  - c. Don't start conversations on the side that will disrupt the class (join in class discussion instead!)
8. Please note that questions – philosophical or otherwise – are rarely well answered over email. If you have questions about how to write, course expectations or anything else, please ask during class (it will certainly benefit your fellow students) or come see me after class or in office hours. If you email with these sorts of questions, I will direct you to my office hours. I am happy to discuss your drafts in my office hours, but I will not review them by email.
9. This course includes a videoconference (VC) section. Students registered in the VC section are able to attend lectures and complete all course components without attendance on campus.
- a. Where disruptions or other technological issues occur with institutional or instructor systems on campus or elsewhere, instructors will ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for VC students.
  - b. This course has the requirements listed below for VC students. Failure to meet these requirements may affect attendance and participation grades or result in a grade of zero for supervised assessments (e.g., exams).

10. *VC Student Requirements*

Technology	A stable internet connection sufficient to meet the class requirements. Webcam, microphone, speakers.
Class Participation	Camera on and showing your face during class. An appropriate screen name.
Test/Exam Supervision These are requirements essential to maintaining the academic integrity of the course. The dual camera option is available to VC students only	Dual camera setup. During the exams you must have a webcam showing your face and a camera behind you showing your work surface with your computer.  If you are unable to meet the dual camera setup requirement VC students can pay to write the exams at an independent proctor location approved by me. Note: the proctor cannot be a friend/family member, etc.  If neither of the above two options work for you, another option is to come to the NWP campus in person and write the exams with the other students during the scheduled time.

**STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/administration/policies/index.html>

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

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

What we do in Philosophy

I like to think of philosophers as product testers for ideas. A product tester doesn't test a product under regular use conditions, but rather puts the product into extreme conditions. For example, if a product is designed to run at  $-25^{\circ}$  Celsius, a product tester might try to see if it works at  $-35^{\circ}$ , because if it works in  $-35^{\circ}$  it's safe to say it will work in  $-25^{\circ}$ . In philosophy, we subject ideas to stress tests by considering the extreme cases. As you read through the readings, you'll find some unlikely and strange scenarios. We want to see if our ideas work in those scenarios, because if our ideas work in weird, extreme scenarios we can be sure they will work in ordinary cases as well.

Just like product testers, the fact that we are testing an idea doesn't mean that we believe it. Sometimes we don't even like the idea! But a product tester is neutral. We run the tests and see how the idea performs. We must always remember that we are testing ideas, not the people who happen to believe in them. As the philosopher Socrates often said, someone who shows you a problem with an idea that you believe in is doing you a favour by showing you that there are better, truer ideas out there to be discovered.