

## HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT

### COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2024

#### PH1600 (A2/VC): Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary Issues 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.

<b>INSTRUCTOR:</b>	Hugh Hunter	<b>PHONE:</b>	780-539-2823
<b>OFFICE:</b>	C421	<b>E-MAIL:</b>	jhunter@nwpolytech.ca
<b>OFFICE HOURS:</b>	Appointments by request.		

#### 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: An Introductory Text*, 4th edition. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.

#### 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 Skills.

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

### 1. 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.
- To examine individual and social assumptions, values, norms, beliefs, and understandings of phenomena in the world.
- To gain an understanding of abstract philosophical concepts.
- To enhance awareness and increase 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 <https://transferalberta.alberta.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:

Participation 10%

Comprehension Quizzes x 5 (10% each)	50%	16 September, 27 September, 7 October, 4 November, 25 November (Optional extra quiz December 6, replaces your lowest grade)
Midterm Exam	20%	Friday, October 18 <sup>th</sup>
Final Exam	20%	TBA
Final Essay Option	(20%)	Students MAY propose a final research essay no later than November 8 to replace the final exam

(A final exam will be scheduled by the Registrar during the final exam period (December 11 to 19). The final exam is due during the final exam period. Please check the registrar’s posting for a schedule of final examinations.)

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

- Monday, September 30, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Friday October 4: Class Cancelled
- Monday, October 14—Thanksgiving
- November 12<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>—Fall Break

Participation:

Philosophy exists in dialogue, and your active participation will help you improve in philosophy. Participation means doing the readings and bringing your questions and ideas to class. As you read, ask yourself, “Is this true?” “Did that argument make sense?” These questions will help you flag passages to raise in class. Participation also consists in engaging in your responsibility to find important information on the course outline, keeping track of due dates, submitting material on time, and keeping up with course content when you are unable to attend class, which includes watching recorded lectures. Your grade will be based on a combination of all these aspects of participation.

Quizzes and Exams:

The quizzes are take-home and should be completed through myClass prior to the due date. The exams are “in-class” (see the requirements for VC students below). The purpose of the quizzes and exams is to give you the opportunity to illustrate your understanding of the course material, which includes course readings, lectures, and in-class discussions. You will also illustrate your critical thinking skills by developing written arguments in response to the given topics. These are all skills you will develop in class; thus, it is to your advantage to attend and actively participate in every class. Further details of the exams will be explained closer to the exam dates.

- Exam and quiz 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.

Contesting Grades:

There should never be any reason for you to feel ashamed or angered by your grade. One of my priorities in this class is to help you learn, and the assignments and my comments on your work are aimed at this goal. I do not expect perfection, and neither should you. I expect you to do your best and to use the assignments to help guide you on how you can improve.

If you wish to contest your grade, please do the following:

1. Double check the assignment instructions and the grading criteria.

2. Thoroughly read all the comments in a charitable manner.
3. Make an appointment or come see me after class your grade at least 24 hours after receiving your graded assignment. It is my policy never to discuss assignments on the day they have been handed back.
4. Come prepared. After looking over the comments and the assignment requirements, you should be able to tell me why you think your answer should have earned more marks.
5. Please remember I can only give you grades for the content represented on the assignment. You may be able to verbally articulate what you meant to say in the meeting, but if that meaning is not clearly illustrated in the assignment content, I cannot give you grades for it.

### 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	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:

6 September	Introduction
9 September	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 1: The Legacy of Socrates
13 September	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 2: God and the Origin of the Universe (2.1 – 2.3)
16 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quiz 1</b></li> <li>• Rachels &amp; Rachels, Chapter 2: God and the Origins of the Universe 2.4</li> </ul>
20 September	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 2: God and the Origin of the Universe, 2.5
23 September	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 3: The Problem of Evil
27 September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quiz 2</b></li> <li>• Rachels &amp; Rachels, Chapter 4: Do we Survive Death, 4.1 – 4.2</li> </ul>
30 September	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – NO CLASS
4 October	NO CLASS
7 October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quiz 3 (7 October)</b></li> </ul>
11 October	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachels &amp; Rachels, Chapter 5: The Problem of Personal Identity</li> <li>• Catch up/Review</li> </ul>
14 October	THANKSGIVING – No Class
18 October	Mid Term Exam
21 October	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 6: Body and Mind
25 October	
28 October	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 7: Could a Machine Think?
1 November	
4 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quiz 3 (November 4)</b></li> </ul>
8 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachels &amp; Rachels, Chapter 8: The Case Against Free Will</li> <li>• <b>Deadline to propose an essay topic (replaces the Final Exam – 8 November)</b></li> </ul>
11 November	FALL BREAK
15 November	FALL BREAK
18 November	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 9: The Debate Over Free Will
22 November	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 10: Our Knowledge of the World around Us
25 November	
29 November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quiz 5 (25 November)</b></li> </ul>
2 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rachels &amp; Rachels, Chapter 12: Why Should we Be Moral</li> </ul>
6 December	Rachels & Rachels, Chapter 13: The Meaning of Life
9 December	Review Class

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

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.

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.

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).

#### *VC Student Requirements*

Technology	<p>A stable internet connection sufficient to meet the class requirements.</p> <p>Webcam, microphone, speakers.</p>
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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.

Responsibilities of all students:

1. Please do not be late for class.
2. Students 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 students miss class, it is their responsibility to obtain the information they missed. If available, recorded lectures may be shared in the case of reasonable absences.
4. Policies regarding final exams are governed by institutional policy. Students should consult the Examinations policy in the NWP Calendar. Students 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.

**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

Philosophers are sort of like 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° Celsius, a product tester might try to see if it works at -35°, because if it works in -35° it's safe to say it will work in -25°. 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. The point is just to 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 how you that there are better, truer ideas out there to be discovered.

### Additional Rules

- You are adults. Please treat class as you would any professional setting. That means governing your actions so as not to disrupt the class.
  - Feel free to use your technology discretely so long as it does not distract others.
  - 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.
  - Don't start conversations on the side that will disrupt the class (join in class discussion instead!)

### Remote Learning Etiquette

- Do not log into class while you are still under the covers in bed. Come to class fully clothed.
- Zoom chat etiquette is the same as verbal chat etiquette. Be respectful with the comments you make in the chat. Stay on topic. Do not use the chat in the same way you use this feature on social media.
- I recommend that you only have the course up on your screen. Wear headphones to help cut out external noise. This will make it easier to focus on what is going on.

### Use of Class Recordings

Classes (or parts of classes) in this course may be recorded by the instructor for use as an instructional resource for the class. These recordings are protected under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) and are to be used for academic purposes only. Students must not sell, duplicate, distribute, or publish evaluative assessments, course lecture notes, handouts, recordings, or other information provided by an instructor, or use the above for any commercial purpose. These restrictions apply to all recorded materials unless you receive express written permission by NWP and all the participants involved in the recording. Students who misuse recordings may also be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct (for more information the Polytechnic Policy on Student Rights and Responsibilities under the section on Academic Misconduct

<https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/administration/policies/>