

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES DEPARTMENT

COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2023

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.

INSTRUCTOR:	Tina Strasbourg	PHONE:	780-539-2237
OFFICE:	C408	E-MAIL:	tstrasbourg@nwpolytech.ca
OFFICE HOURS:	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.

Resource Materials links posted on D2L

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 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.
- See section on Philosophical Etiquette for a further description.

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.

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 <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:

Participation	10%	
Comprehension Quizzes x 5 (10% each)	50%	Due dates TBA
Midterm Exam	20%	Monday, October 23 rd
Final Exam	20%	TBA

(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, October 9—Thanksgiving

November 13th to November 17th—Fall Break

Participation:

Participation is more than just speaking in class. Being an engaged listener is to participate in a meaningful way. 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. Of course, it also entails finishing the reading beforehand and preparing any questions you might have about the material. One benefit of participation is that it better enables you to understand difficult philosophical concepts, get clarity on others' arguments, and offers the opportunity to practice developing our own arguments. 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 D2L 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:

How you do on an assignment has no bearing on how much I respect (or like) you. 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 to discuss your grade. Please do not ask me to go over your individual assignment in class.
4. Come to the appointment prepared. After looking over the comments and the assignment requirements, you should be able to articulate 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.
6. Language is very important. I am happy to listen to your well thought out reasons for adding marks. Please do not approach me in a combative, disrespectful manner. For example, it is better to approach the discussion from the perspective that grades are earned rather than the view that grades are given. This perspective allows us to go through the comments together and to make clear how you earned

your grades. This process will better enable you to show me how you think you met the requirements, and if you can do so I will have no problem with changing your grade.

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:

Introduction to Philosophy

Rachels & Rachels Appendix, “How to Evaluate Arguments”

Introduction Slides—D2L

Argumentation Theory

Christopher Gregorio, “Against Epistemic Arrogance”—D2L

Katharina Stevens, “The Virtuous Arguer: One Person, Four Roles” —D2L

The Existence of God and Theodicy

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

Rachels & Rachels Chapter 3, “The Problem of Evil”

Mind, Body, and Personal Identity

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

Rachels & Rachels Chapter 6, “Body and Mind”

Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to Be a Bat?”—D2L

Philip Goff, “The Case for Panpsychism”—D2L

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

John R. Searle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”—D2L

Free Will

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

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

W.T. Stace, “Compatibilism Defended”—D2L

Philosophy of War

Michael Walzer, “Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses”—D2L

Paul Viminiz, “A Defence of Terrorism”—D2L

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	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.

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:

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 to not be *purposefully* offensive.

Pet Peeves

- Cell phones that ring during class or use of cell phones during class (this includes texting).
- 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.
- Use of laptops or other electronic devices that disrupts other students.

Remote Learning Etiquette

(The following list has been created from past experiences with remote learning. Please feel free to add things you've learned that make for a better remote learning experience during the discussion).

- 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.
- Avoid distractions. Only have the course up on your screen. Wear headphones to help cut out external noise.
- Same as with on-campus attendance, **stay off your phone during class!!!** Seriously, I can often tell when you are looking at your phone.
- If you have pets who are not camera shy, you must introduce them to the class at least once throughout the term.

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/>)