



DEPARTMENT ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE –WINTER 2021

PH1600 (A3): Philosophical Analysis of Contemporary Issues – 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Tina Strasbourg **PHONE:** 780-539-2237
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OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

WINTER 2021 DELIVERY:

Remote Delivery. This course is delivered remotely. There are no face-to-face or onsite requirements. Students must have a computer with a webcam and reliable internet connection. Technological support is available through helpdesk@gprc.ab.ca

Note: GPRC reserves the right to change the course delivery.

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 D2L

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 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 **Thinking Skills** in

- 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.
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories.

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

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

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 and Critical Analysis Assignment 1	20%	Due date: February 10 th
Comprehension and Critical Analysis Assignment 2	20%	Due date: March 10 th
Comprehension and Critical Analysis Assignment 3	20%	Due date: April 7 th
Take-home Final Exam	30%	Due date: TBA

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.

Comprehension and Critical Analysis Assignments:

You will complete three take-home assignments throughout the term. The purpose of the assignments 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.

Take-home Final Exam:

The final exam will have a format similar to the comprehension and critical analysis assignments. The final exam will be a take home exam. Please check the registrar's posting for a schedule of final examinations.

- Alternative arrangements for missed exams and assignments are typically 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 or holidays are not considered legitimate reasons for missing assigned deadlines.
- Unless previously discussed, 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, including weekends.

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 your learning.

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

1. Double check the assignment instructions, the grading criteria, and the comments first.
2. Make an appointment to discuss your grade. Please do not ask me to go over your individual assignment in class.
3. Come to the appointment prepared. After looking over the assignment and comparing what the assignment asked for and what you submitted, you should be able to articulate why you think your answer should have earned more marks.
4. 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: (The following criteria may be changed to suite the particular course/instructor)

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:

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

Guest Lecture: Katharina Stevens. The reading she will cover is posted on D2L, “The Roles We Make Others Take: Thoughts on the Ethics of Arguing”

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”

Guest Lecture: Paul Viminitz. Dr. Viminitz will give us an account of some philosophical issues with theodicy. (February 24th)

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 Viminitz, “A Defence of Terrorism”—D2L

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Recall that one of the requirements for registering for remote learning is that you have a computer with a webcam and reliable internet connection. As such, students will be required to turn on their cameras during class. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis with good reasons and evidence as to why you cannot meet this requirement.
2. Regular attendance and participation in discussion is expected, which is another reason why having your camera on is a requirement of the course. Participation is a way to help advance the discussion, gain understanding of course material, and encourage others.
3. Please do not be late for class.
4. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class. Do not fall behind in the assigned readings because it is difficult to catch up.
5. 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.
6. Be thoughtful about where you are located during class and while you are watching recorded lectures. Do not separately record or share any content containing members of the class (including the instructor) without express written consent. The information shared during lectures falls under the purview of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and hence any violations will be punishable according to this act. <https://www.servicealberta.ca/foip/legislation/foip-act.cfm>.

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>

**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.

Remote Learning Etiquette

(The following list has been created from experiences with remote learning last term. Please feel free to add things you've learned 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.
 - Generally speaking, 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.
- Stay off your phone during class!!! Seriously, I can see when you are looking at your phone. Cell phones in general are a pet peeve of mine, so I am hypersensitive to their misuse during class.
- If for some reason I am dropped from the Zoom lecture, please give me a few minutes to log back in. This issue only occurred three times last term, but I wanted to establish a protocol in case it happens again.
- If you have pets who are not camera shy, you must introduce them to the class at least once throughout the term.