

PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy Online (Spring, 2018)

Instructor: Dr. Ian McDaniel

OFFICE HOURS:

Physical Office Hours: 09:30am – 10:50am TR, and by appointment.

Office: 360 CHSS building

Skype Office Hours: By appointment

Skype Address: [ian.k.mcdaniel](https://www.skype.com/people/ian.k.mcdaniel)

Students are encouraged to make liberal use of these hours to meet with the instructor to seek greater clarity on the topics covered throughout the course, peripheral topics of philosophical interest or information regarding the philosophy program in general.

EMAIL:

ikm001@shsu.edu (Please allow up to 24 hours for a response.)

When contacting the instructor for an appointment, please include multiple dates and times when you are available for an appointment. The instructor will select the first available meeting time from those you submit which works for his schedule and send a confirmation email setting the date & time of the appointment.

SHSU CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT:

This course satisfies three (3) hours of the Sam Houston State University core curriculum in Component Area IV: Language, Philosophy, and Culture.

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A general examination of the fields and issues of philosophy as discussed by both classical and modern philosophers. Philosophical problems discussed include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge and truth, the issue of human free will, and theories of moral judgement. This course will consider prominent issues in philosophy, including but not limited to:

- What can we know and how can we know it?
- What is the relationship between the mind and the body?
- What defines a particular person as *that* person and no other?
- What is free will and do human beings have free will?
- What is the relationship between the existence of God and the existence of evil in the world?

The readings for the course will be a combination of classic and contemporary works on these topics, including Plato, Rene Descartes, David Hume, Immanuel Kant and others.

The course will focus upon metaphysical and descriptive approaches to the questions considered as opposed to normative questions (how things are as opposed to how we think they should be).

Course goals include the following:

- Introducing and familiarizing students to certain prominent views in philosophy.
- Understanding how to approach philosophical topics and address such issues from an appropriately philosophical perspective.
- Acquiring the ability to discuss, and especially write, about philosophical positions in a forceful and polemical manner while being able to identify, explicate, and respond effectively to important counter-arguments.

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

</dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf> available at:
<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful

procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

[For more information on these policies, please visit: http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/](http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/)

“W” – COURSE STATEMENT:

This is a “W” course, which means that at least 50 percent of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools your instructor will use to help you learn course material. Some writing activities will require you to draft and revise your work, with or without instructor feedback. Others may not receive a grade but are designed to assist you in critical reflection of the course material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool your instructor will use to assess your level of learning. During the completion of this course you will have the opportunity to submit versions of your written work for review and feedback from both your fellow students and the instructor. It is highly recommended that every student takes full advantage of both of these sources of feedback on their writing throughout the semester.

SATISFYING THE “W” COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This course satisfies the “W” course requirements through the completion of the Discussion Journals, which will count for 50% of the overall course grade. Through the completion of these assignments students will have the opportunity to receive feedback on their writing from both the instructor and their fellow students and to incorporate that feedback into their future writing as the course progresses.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The university rules and regulations regarding academic integrity will be in effect throughout the course and all students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these policies. While discussion about the material in and out of class with other students and the instructor is encouraged, all work must reflect the student’s own understanding of the material. All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The

University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Any violation of the academic integrity policy will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for the assignment, failure of the course, suspension and/or expulsion from the university depending upon the severity of the violation. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/index.html>

GRADE SCALE:

This course will use the following grade scale for assigning final course grades:

A	90 and above
B	80 to less than 90
C	70 to less than 80
D	60 to less than 70
F	less than 60

EVALUATION AND GRADING:

Each student will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

Quizzes (10%)

Each student will be required to complete two (2) quizzes early in the semester, each worth 5% of the overall grade. The first quiz will focus upon the information in the course syllabus. The second quiz will focus on the material of the "Basic Logic" section of the course. These quizzes will be administered online via the blackboard course website. Each quiz is due at the date and time specified by the table at the end of this syllabus. Late submissions will be penalized 10 % of the grade for each 4-hour time increment past the submission deadline until the assignment is received.

Examinations (40%)

Each student will be required to complete three (3) examinations: two mid-term examinations and a final examination. The mid-term examinations will each comprise 10% of the student's overall grade. The final examination will comprise 20% of the student's overall grade. The final examination will be comprehensive. A study guide for each exam will be provided (via blackboard) at least one (1) week prior to the date of the exam. Examinations will generally be multiple choice in format, though the professor reserves the right to include alternately formatted questions if deemed appropriate by the instructor for achieving course goals. These examinations will be administered online via the blackboard course website. Each exam is due at the date and time specified by the table at the end of this syllabus. Late submissions will be penalized 10 % of the grade for

each 4-hour time increment past the submission deadline until the assignment is received.

Writing Assignments (50%)

Each student will be required to complete a series of writing assignments, totaling a combined 50% of the student's overall grade. Students will be divided by the instructor into reading/discussion groups at the start of the course. Each member of the group will be required to discuss the reading material with other members of the group via online forum posts on the course website. Each week the instructor will provide all students with a selection of reading discussion questions/topics (approximately 4-5 questions each week) to help guide these discussions. Students are to use the online discussion with the other members of their group to develop their own and the group's understanding of the reading material and to inform their answers to the reading discussion questions/topics. Each student will then be required to submit a "Discussion Journal" which provides the individual student's answers to the assigned discussion questions/topics.

Each Discussion Journal will be graded by the instructor and worth a total of twenty-five (25) points. Twenty (20) points of each Discussion Journal will be determined by the student's individual answers to the questions assigned. Five (5) points of each Discussion Journal will be determined by the individual student's contributions to the group discussion in the group forum for the week. To assist the instructor in facilitating this portion of the student's grade, each student will be required to submit, along with their individual answers to the discussion questions, an assessment of each other student's contributions to the group forum that week. Students must use the following scale when determining the contributions of their fellow group members each week.

- Excellent: the student did all (or nearly all) of the following:
 - produced multiple shorter posts or fewer lengthier posts with insightful or helpful comments about the reading material
 - responded to other student's writing/answers with high quality helpful comments, shared their own writing and answers to the questions
 - asked probing and insightful questions to spur discussion of the material
 - engaged productively in developing the group's understanding of the material.
- Satisfactory: the student did two or more of the following:
 - offered a couple of short comments that contributed on some level to the group discussion
 - offered some feedback to other students on their ideas/writing
 - asked questions of others to encourage discussion
- Unsatisfactory:
 - the student offered one or two comments which, while more than merely saying "I agree", did not contribute to the group discussion in a meaningful or valuable way

- questions asked by the student were non-sensical or suggest that the student is not actively engaging with the material/reading/discussion
- the student is attempting to appear “busy” in the discussion without actively engaging with other members of the group
- Non-existent (or “I agree”):
 - the student did not post or contribute at all to the group discussion
 - the comments posted did not contribute to the overall dynamic of the group’s understanding
 - the student’s only comments effectively amounted to saying, “I agree with what’s already been said.”

These individual assessments of other groups members will be used by the instructor as a starting point to facilitate the grading of each individual student’s contributions to the group discussion in the group forum for the week. However, the instructor will determine the final grade of each student’s assignment for the course.

Each discussion journal will be due by 8am on the Monday of the week following the assigned reading material and discussion questions as detailed by the table at the end of the course syllabus. Late submissions will be penalized 10 % of the grade for each 4-hour time increment past the submission deadline until the assignment is received.

These discussion journals and the online forums offer students multiple opportunities to receive feedback on their individual writing. Students are encouraged to share their answers in written form with other members of the group and to offer feedback to each other member of the group on the nature and clarity of their writing. Students are also able to receive feedback from the instructor during these interactions. The instructor will monitor the group discussions and will be available for individual feedback during office hours.

ELECTRONIC DATA STORAGE POLICY:

The university provides all students with data storage and backup on the university servers. Students are expected to maintain backup files of their work. A student whose computer “crashes” and thus “loses his/her work” as a result of failing to maintain adequate backup files will not be considered to have a valid excuse for an extension if the only reason for the extension is that the student did not take the time to ensure that his/her materials were preserved on the university servers.

TEXTS:

The following text is required for this course:

Introduction to Philosophy—7th Edition, Perry, Bratman, and Fischer (eds.), Oxford, 2015.

Additional readings will be made available by the instructor either via blackboard or as searchable .pdf files that can be downloaded at any campus computer terminal.

The following online guide to writing a philosophy paper is strongly recommended by the instructor for all students to utilize when writing for the course:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

On the following pages is the planned schedule of reading assignments and assignment due dates. Students should be aware that changes in the exact dates of some reading assignments may occur. If significant deviations occur in the reading schedule, a revised course schedule will be issued by the instructor.

A student who misses an assignment because s/he was not informed of a change of date in the assignment due date will not be considered to have an acceptable excuse if the only reason for missing the exam was a failure to keep informed of prior announcements concerning schedule changes.

Week #	Dates	CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENT
		Unit 1: Logic	
Week 1	1/17 – 1/19	Course Intro & The Origins of Philosophy (Plato's Apology)	PBF 3-8, 18-21. PBF 22-37.
Week 2	1/22 – 1/26	Online Syllabus Quiz Due 1/22 8am Basic Logic: Reasoning & Argumentation	PBF 9-14, PBF 15-17
		Unit 2: Epistemology	
Week 3	1/29 – 2/2	Online Logic Exam Due 1/29 8am The Concept of Knowledge: Plato's Theatetus & Gettier Problems	PBF 121; 126-133 PBF 133-135. PBF 13, 15-17
Week 4	2/5 – 2/9	Discussion Journal #1 Due 2/5 8am The Problem of the External World: Descartes' Meditations I & II Philosophy & Film #1 The Matrix (or Inception)	PBF 121-123, 136-139 PBF 160-167, PBF 12
Week 5	2/12 – 2/16	Discussion Journal #2 Due 2/12 8am Problem of Induction and Solutions? Hume & Salmon Pragmatic Justification: Pascal's Wager.	PBF 123-125, 193-199, 217-220. PBF 199-201, 232-236. PBF 20. PBF 51-53.
		Unit 3: Philosophy of Mind	
Week 6	2/19 – 2/23	Midterm 1 (Weeks 1 – 5) Due 2/19 8am Cartesian Dualism: Descartes & Ryle	PBF 239-242, 138-141, 153-160 PBF 251-259. PBF 21

Week 7	2/26 – 3/2	Discussion Journal #3 Due 2/26 8am Identity Theory of Mind & Thinking Machines: Nagel and Turing	PBF 311-319 PBF 242-43, 285-297. PBF 21
Week 8	3/5 – 3/9	Discussion Journal #4 Due 3/5 8am Thinking Machines: Searle Philosophy & Film #2: The Measure of a Man	PBF 298-310. PBF 12
	3/12 – 3/16	<i>Spring Break, No Class</i>	
		Unit 4: The Bigger Questions	
Week 9	3/19 – 3/23	Identity: Perry's Dialogue-Nights 1 & 2 Thursday 3/22: Midterm 2 (Weeks 6 – 9)	PBF 333-340. PBF 6
Week 10	3/26 – 3/30	Discussion Journal #5 Due 3/26 8am Identity: Perry Night #3/ Williams Dennett's Where Am I? <i>3/30: Good Friday, No Class</i>	PBF 340- 357 PBF 383-391. PBF 25
Week 11	4/2 – 4/6	Discussion Journal #6 Due 4/2 8am Free Will: Van Inwagen & Incompatibilism, Chisholm & Agent Causation	PBF 400-411 PBF 392-399. PBF 18
Week 12	4/9 – 4/13	Discussion Journal #7 Due 4/9 8am Free Will: Hume & Classical Compatibilism	PBF 412-422. PBF 10
Week 13	4/16 – 4/20	Discussion Journal #8 Due 4/16 8am Problem of Evil: Leibniz & Perry's 1 st Morning, Perry's Dialogue, Tom Honey	PBF 94-102 PBF 103-119. PBF 24
Week 14	4/23 – 4/27	Discussion Journal #9 Due 4/23 8am Anti-theism : Dostoevsky	The Brothers Karamazov, Part II, Book 5, Ch. 4 http://www.classicreader.com/book/276/35/
Week 15	4/30 – 5/4	Discussion Journal #10 Due 4/30 8am Philosophy & Film #3: God on Trial Semester Review and Exam Preparation	
Finals Week	5/7 – 5/10	Final Exam Due Friday, 5/11 8am	