



Syllabus: PHIL 251.200: Introduction to Philosophy (Honors)



Spring 2022; Dr. Stephen H. Daniel

Tuesday & Thursday: 2:20-3:35; YMCA 115

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Office (YMCA 417) hours: Tues 12:30-2:00, 3:45-5:00; Thurs 12:30-2:00

Course Description: In **Introduction to Philosophy (Honors)** students develop the critical-thinking skills needed to write and speak effectively about knowledge, freedom, identity, the mind-body relation, God, and ethics. This means being able to identify issues, present arguments, critique those arguments, and formulate replies to those criticisms. **There are no prerequisites for this course.**

Course Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify and explain leading debates in philosophy;
- Interpret and analyze the argumentative structure of philosophical material;
- Critically evaluate theories and arguments;
- Illustrate enhancements in their critical thinking and sense of personal and social responsibility.

Course Materials: (1) *Ultimate Questions* (4th ed) by Nils Rauhut ([TAMU Bookstore](#)) and (2) Readings linked to this syllabus. Unlinked page numbers below refer to Rauhut pages; pages linked to *Readings* are found here.

Jan. 18	What is Philosophy? 1-12	Mar. 10	God: religious experiences, cosmological argument 120-29
20	Activity of Philosophy , <i>Readings</i> 1-9	22	Design argument 129-33; Hume's critique, Readings 42-48
25	Philosophical Tools, 13-32	24	Ontological/wager arguments 133-40
27	Knowledge/Skepticism 33-43, Descartes <i>Readings</i> 10-12	[27	Sunday midnight: COVID essay due]
Feb. 1	Empiricism 43-48, Berkeley <i>Readings</i> 13-16	29	Pascal, James, Kierkegaard, Readings 49-58
3	[No class: Ice Day]	31	Problem of evil 140-48
8	Hume on Induction 48-50; Readings 17-23	Apr. 5	Ethical relativism/divine command 149-60
10	Rationalism 50-57, Kant <i>Readings</i> 24-25	7	Utilitarianism 160-66, Readings 59-65
15	Free will/hard determinism 58-65	12	Kantian/duty ethics 167-72 Readings 66-73
17	Compatibilism 65-71	14	Virtue ethics 172-80 Readings 74-80
22	Libertarianism 72-76, Sartre on freedom : <i>Readings</i> 26-33	19	Nietzsche on morality, Readings 80-84 (Q-drop)
24	Personal identity 77-96	21	Rawls & Nozick on Justice, Readings 85-90
Mar. 1	Test One	26	Nagel on the absurdity of life, Readings 88-93
3	Mind-body dualism 97-107	28	Test Two
8	Physicalist theories 107-19		No final exam

General Comments

- *This Core Curriculum Course focuses on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express human experience. It aims to develop skills in critical thinking and personal and social responsibility.*

Grades

- Test One (24 pts), Test Two (30 pts); three-minute quizzes at the end of each class (each with two true/false, two multiple-choice questions: total value 46 pts), and a COVID-19 essay (5 pts): total 105 pts. Graded quizzes begin in the second week of class (Jan. 25).
- Practice quizzes occur during the first week of class.

- For this course, you will write a 250-word essay that shows your familiarity with the concept of **personal and social responsibility** regarding COVID-19 (5% of grade). Your essay (due on Mar. 27) should focus on the following question: **should students and faculty be *required* to be vaccinated and wear masks?** As indicated on the syllabus, your essay will be graded on content and format:
 - In terms of its **content**, your essay will be evaluated on how well you
 - **identify the ethical issues of COVID-19 and summarize complexities involved in the topic**
 - **defend a position, considering the complexities of the issue and objections to your position, and raise counter-arguments to those objections**
 - **specify actions tied to your position and evaluate the consequences of those actions**
 - In terms of **format**, your essay will be evaluated on how well you
 - **understand the context and purpose of the essay, focusing on a specific point**
 - **use appropriate and compelling content to illustrate your familiarity with the subject**
 - **incorporate specifically philosophical ways of organizing the presentation**
 - **use high-quality, credible philosophical sources to support your arguments**
 - **communicate your position clearly and accurately**
 - Do not go over the 250-word limit (footnoted material is not included in your word count). Since you are submitting your essay within your Canvas account, you do not need to include your name or other identifying information: just your essay. Make sure you address all aspects of the essay mentioned above. You will lose points if you do not address these points, ***especially how your position indicates familiarity with personal and social responsibility***. Essays will be graded through Turnitin.
- *Minimum grades: 90=A, 80=B, 70=C, 58=D.*
- *Student Rule 7: you are expected to attend all classes and read assigned readings. Please notify me if you have a legitimate reason for missing a class.*
- If you violate the Aggie Honor Code (e.g. by plagiarizing from any source including the Internet or sharing answers on quizzes or the mid-semester or final exams), ***you fail the course***.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do. Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Sect. 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)). You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Statement on COVID-19

To help protect Aggieland and stop the spread of COVID-19, Texas A&M University urges students to be vaccinated and to wear masks in classrooms and all other academic facilities on campus, including labs. Doing so exemplifies the Aggie Core Values of respect, leadership, integrity, and selfless service by putting community concerns above individual preferences. COVID-19 vaccines and masking — regardless of vaccination status — have been shown to be safe and effective at reducing spread to others, infection, hospitalization, and death.