



Syllabus: PHIL 251.200: Introduction to Philosophy (Honors)

Spring 2023; 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 critical-thinking skills needed to write and speak effectively about knowledge, freedom, identity, the mind-body relation, God, and ethics. This means identifying issues, presenting arguments, and critiquing those arguments in written, oral, and visual formats (e.g., in PowerPoint presentations) that highlight one's social and personal responsibility. **There are no prerequisites for this course.**

Course Learning Outcomes: By the course's end, students should be able to explain debates in philosophy, analyze philosophical arguments; critically evaluate theories and arguments; and illustrate enhancements in their critical thinking and their sense of personal and social responsibility.

Course Materials: readings are linked to the course syllabus. All readings appear in [Aeon](#), an online journal featuring essays by scholars in philosophy, the history of ideas, ethics, and "life's big questions."

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| <p>Jan. 17 Nature of Philosophy: As Conversation, As Therapy, Universal, Absurd, Bad Thinkers</p> <p>19 Metaphysics: Reality, Interrelations</p> <p>24 History of Ideas: Practical Roots of Ideas, First Romantics, Being Contrarian</p> <p>26 Thinkers: Epicurus, Cynics/Nietzsche, Aristotle</p> <p>31 Thinkers: Renaissance Phil, Montaigne on Inner Life, Descartes: Knowledge (film)</p> <p>Feb. 2 Thinkers: Spinoza's Philosophy, Spinoza: We Are Nature, Bayle on Atheists, Berkeley</p> <p>7 Thinkers: Rousseau on Nature, Rousseau on Education, Hume the Humane</p> <p>9 Thinkers: Hegel on History, Hegel's Dialectic, Hegel and Human Nature</p> <p>14 Thinkers: Schopenhauer, Mill: Utilitarianism, Nietzsche and Diogenes</p> <p>16 Thinkers: Pragmatism, Peirce, Wm. James, Dewey</p> <p>21 Thinkers: De Beauvoir, Weil, Derrida</p> <p>23 Women: Women Philosophers, Mary Astell, 19th Century Women Philosophers</p> <p>28 Knowledge: Crude Knowledge, Epistemology, Can Science/Math Describe Reality?</p> <p>Mar. 2 Mid-semester Exam</p> <p>5 Essay One Due Sunday at midnight</p> <p>7 Philosophy of Mind: Pre-Rational/Imaginary Knowledge, Self as Network, Uncertainty</p> <p>9 Philosophy of Mind: Zombie Argument/Consciousness, The Now, Feminist Epistemology</p> | <p>Mar. 21 The Good Life: Luck, Different Wisdoms, Stoics as Activists, Indifference Is a Power (Stoicism)</p> <p>23 The Good Life: Consolation of Philosophy (Boethius), Authenticity, Evolution, Arendt on the Banality of Evil</p> <p>28 Beauty & Aesthetics: Sensitivity to Beauty, Beauty & the Sublime, Beauty & Morality</p> <p>30 Ethics: The Right Thing To Do, The Moral Right to Believe; The Trolley Problem Problem</p> <p>Apr. 4 Ethics: Empathy, Utilitarianism, Collective Responsibility, Punishment</p> <p>6 Ethics: Inflating Moral Claims, Forget Morality, Ethics without Religion</p> <p>11 Ethics: Animal Ethics, Nihilism, Skepticism and Democracy</p> <p>13 Virtues/Vices: Virtue of Mischief, Vice Dressed as Virtue, Pessimism, Philosophy's Racism</p> <p>18 Philosophy of Science: Philosophy Is Important for Science, Awe in Scientific Theorizing, Natural Philosophy, Irrational Motivation for Science (Q-drop deadline)</p> <p>20 Philosophy of Religion: Problems Proving God Exists, Transcendence After God Dies, Miracles</p> <p>25 Political Philosophy: Philosophy and Conflict, Feelings and Facts, Conceptual Overreach</p> <p>27 Death: Stoics on Death, Believing In Our Own Mortality, Birth and Death, Final Thoughts</p> <p>30 Essay Two Due Sunday at midnight</p> <p>May 9 Final Exam: 1:00-3:00 pm</p> |
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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.*
- This is an Honors class. That means that students are expected to engage in exercises that exceed those in ordinary sections of the course. In particular, individual students are eligible to take this course if he or she graduated in the top 10% of his or her high school class and has an SAT score of at least 1360 or a composite 28 on the ACT (minimum 27 on both verbal and math) **or** has a current minimum GPR of 3.5 or higher.
- Over the course of the semester, each student will give **four** PowerPoint presentations in class. Each will last 15–20 minutes and include three or four slides (Times New Roman 24–point font size minimum) covering randomly–assigned readings. That means that each class will have two student presentations (beginning Jan. 24). Students will be evaluated based on whether:
 - the presentation correctly identified the important points made by the author
 - the presenter directly engaged his/her audience during the presentation
 - the presenter clarified, amplified, and explained points made in the reading(s)
 - the presenter correctly answered questions raised by other students

Grades

- The four PowerPoint presentations will each be worth five points (20 pts). The mid-semester and final exams will be worth 30 points each (60 pts). Two 1000-word essays on the topics addressed will count for 10 pts each (20 pts). Total: 100 pts.
- *Minimum grades: 88=A, 78=B, 68=C, 57=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), *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.