



René Magritte. *The Human Condition*. 1935

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

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**SEMESTER:** Summer I (2018)

**COURSE:** PHIL 1301-003 (CRN: 34752)

**TIME AND LOCATION:** M-F 2:00-4:10, UGLC 232

**INSTRUCTOR:** Aleksandar ("Aleks") Pjevalica  
[pea-yeah-va-lee-tza]

**INSTRUCTOR'S EMAIL:** [apjevalica@utep.edu](mailto:apjevalica@utep.edu)

**INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE HOURS:** T-Th 4:15-5:15 in  
Worrell Hall 111

This course will serve as an introduction to Western philosophy, from its fertile roots in Ancient Greece, to its current bloom throughout the world. Although contemporary philosophy is a technical academic discipline composed of distinct subfields, we can capture its historical spirit by broadly defining it as *the activity of rationally questioning and criticizing the fundamental beliefs and actions that guide the course of our everyday lives*. As a result, philosophers are in a unique position to explore the most basic and arguably the most important questions facing human existence. Let's take a glance at some of the major subfields in contemporary academic philosophy:

- i) *Epistemology* is the study of knowledge: What is knowledge? What are its limits? Is knowledge even possible? And if so, what makes it possible? What kinds of things can we know? What is the difference between believing something and knowing it? How can we justify our beliefs?
- ii) *Philosophy of Mind* is the study of the fundamental nature of the mind: What is the mind? How is it related to the brain? Can nonhuman animals think? Can computers think? What is consciousness? What is self-consciousness? What is the relationship between our thoughts and our actions?
- iii) *Metaphysics* is the study of the fundamental nature of reality and its constituents: What kinds of things exist? What are those kinds of things like? What is the relationship between an object (e.g. a flower) and its properties (e.g. its color)? What is time? What is space? What does it mean to say that some event A *caused* some other event B? Does God exist? What is an individual? What makes an individual the *same* individual over time? Does free-will exist?

iv) *Value Theory* is the general study of value. Subfields within value theory include:

*Ethics:* How should one behave towards others? Is it ever morally justifiable to torture or kill another person? Do humans have moral obligations to nonhuman animals? Are moral rules relative to a culture or are they absolute?

*Political Philosophy:* What is justice? What is the best way to organize society? What is the relationship between the individual and her society? Is civil disobedience ever justified? What does “freedom” mean? What is the relationship between individual liberty and the law?

*Aesthetics:* What is beauty? What kinds of things are beautiful? Is beauty relative (“in the eye of the beholder”) or is it absolute? What is art? What makes something a good work of art?

By the end of this course, we should 1) have a working understanding of the major figures in the history of philosophy, including Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, and Russell, 2) understand some of the main problems and methods that define epistemology, the philosophy of mind, metaphysics and value theory, and 3) have learned to think philosophically about our own lives.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

1. *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings* (7th Edition)

Edited by Perry, Bratman & Fischer, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Student Resource Page: <http://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780190200237/stud/selfquiz/>

2. Additional readings posted on Blackboard under “Readings”.

3. PowerPoint lecture slides are available on Blackboard. You may download and print these to use for taking notes during lectures.

4. Paper and pen for in-class writing assignments.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) **Class Participation (10%)**: Students are expected to complete the reading for each class meeting and bring their books to class. They will be called upon in class to answer questions about the reading and are expected to make thoughtful comments or to ask well-formulated questions. No question is too simple or naïve to ask! Students are expected to maintain a respectful demeanor towards each other and the instructor.

2) **Surprise In-Class Reading Quizzes (10%)**: Each quiz will consist of several multiple-choice questions. Each quiz will be based on the reading material that is due on the day the quiz is given. In order to prepare for these quizzes, you must get in the habit of reading and re-reading the assigned texts carefully before you come to class. Each quiz is worth 2% of your final grade.

3) **Weekly Blackboard Exams (45%)**: There will be four Blackboard exams, one for each week of the course. Each exam will be available on Friday and due on Sunday. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions on topics that we have discussed that week. In order to prepare for these exams, you must get in the habit of reading and re-reading the assigned texts carefully and take the practice quizzes on the readings that are available on the Oxford University Press website (see Required Texts above for the link). Note: The exams may cover the assigned reading material and/or class lecture. Each exam will be given on Blackboard and will have a time limit. Here is the exam schedule:

**Exam #1 (10%)**: Available June 15. Due June 17 by 11:59pm.

**Exam #2 (10%)**: Available June 22. Due July 24 by 11:59pm.

**Exam #3 (10%)**: Available June 29. Due July 1 by 11:59pm.

**Exam #4 (15%)**: Available July 6. Due July 8 by 11:59pm.

Note: Late exams will not be accepted.

4) **In-Class Writing Assignments (10%)**: Periodically throughout the semester I will ask you to write short in-class assignments. You will submit these assignments to the T.A. after the class session. The assignments will be graded on a Credit/No Credit basis.

Note: If you fail to submit your assignment during class or if you are absent from class, you will receive no credit for the assignment.

5) **Essay Assignment (25%)**: You will write a 1250-1500 word essay on a topic selected from a list of topics. Essay topics will be available on June 22. The essay will be due on the last day of class.

## COURSE POLICIES

### Classroom Conduct Code:

- The use of electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, audio recorders, etc.) is strictly forbidden.
- Arrive to class on time.
- Do not chat with fellow classmates during the lecture/discussion.
- I expect you to participate in class discussion on a regular basis. If you have a question or comment, raise your hand (and I will call on you).
- Treat your fellow classmates with respect at all times, including during class discussion.

Note: If you violate the Classroom Conduct Code, you will be asked to leave the class.

No Extra-Credit Assignments: There are no extra-credit assignments in this course.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism:** Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action as stated in the UTEP policy: <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm>.

**Note:** The Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution will adjudicate all plagiarism cases.

**Email:** All class email correspondences will be conducted exclusively through the email address that you have listed with the university.

**Blackboard:** We will be using the Blackboard shell for our class throughout the semester. If you have not done so already, you should familiarize yourself with accessing Blackboard. I will be using Blackboard to post course materials, including the syllabus and quizzes.

**Support and Accommodation:** UTEP seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. This university will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with The Center for Accommodations and Support Services within the first two weeks of classes, and inform the faculty member to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)  
Union East Building Room 106  
Phone: (915) 747-5148  
Voice Fax: (915) 747-8712  
Email: [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu)

## **SCHEDULE (provisional)**

### **Week 1: Introduction**

**June 11:** Syllabus; *Allegory of the Cave* from *The Republic* by Plato

**June 12:** *Introduction; Logical Toolkit*

**June 13:** *Apology* by Plato; *The Value of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell

**June 14:** *Happiness and Meaning* by Susan Wolf [Reading on Blackboard]

**June 15:** *Meditations on First Philosophy I & II* by René Descartes

### **Week 2: Epistemology**

**June 18:** *Meditations on First Philosophy III & IV* by René Descartes

**June 19:** *Meditations on First Philosophy V & VI* by René Descartes

**June 20:** *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume

**June 21:** *Theaetetus* by Plato [Reading on Blackboard]; *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?* by Edmund L. Gettier [Reading on Blackboard]

**June 22:** *Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?* by Lorraine Code [Reading on Blackboard]

### **Week 3: Philosophy of Mind & Metaphysics**

**June 25:** Reread *Meditation VI* by Descartes; *Descartes's Myth* by Gilbert Ryle; *The Nature of Mind* by David M. Armstrong

**June 26:** *Intentional Systems* by Daniel Dennett [Reading on Blackboard]; *Minds, Brains, and Programs* by John Searle

**June 27:** *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* by Thomas Nagel [Reading on Blackboard]; *What Mary Didn't Know* by Frank Jackson

**June 28:** *Are Mental States Reducible Irreducible to Neurobiological States?* by Patricia Churchland [Reading on Blackboard]; *Numbers and Other Immaterial Objects* by Gideon Rosen [Reading on Blackboard]

**June 29:** *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Section X by David Hume [Reading on Blackboard]; *The Ontological Argument* by St. Anselm; *The Existence of God* by St. Aquinas; *Natural Theology* by William Paley

### **Week 4: Metaphysics and Value Theory**

**July 2:** *The Wager* by Blaise Pascal; *God, Evil and the Best of All Possible Worlds* by Gottfried Leibniz; *For the Love of Reason* by Louise M. Antony

**July 3:** *The Self and the Future* by Bernard Williams; *Where Am I?* by Daniel Dennett

**July 4:** UNIVERSITY CLOSED

**July 5:** *Personal Identity* by Derek Parfit; *The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will* by Peter van Inwagen; *Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility* by Harry Frankfurt

**July 6:** *Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility* by Susan Wolf; *The Meaning of Human Existence* by Richard Taylor; *The Meanings of Lives* by Susan Wolf