



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:**

Fall 2019

**COURSE:**

PHIL 1301-004 (CRN: 16637)

**TIME AND LOCATION:**

T/TH 12:00-1:20 in UGLC 126

**INSTRUCTOR:** Aleksandar ("Aleks") Pjevalica

[pea-yeah-va-lee-tza]

**INSTRUCTOR'S EMAIL:**

apjevalica@utep.edu

**INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE HOURS:**

T/TH 1:30-3:00

**TEACHING ASSISTANT:**

Juan Duran Muniz (jcduranmuni@miners.utep.edu)

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 investigating and questioning the fundamental beliefs and actions that guide the course of our everyday lives with the aim of leading better 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*: What is a good human life? How should one behave towards others? Is it ever morally justifiable to harm 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 freedom 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 makes something a work of 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, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hume, and Mill, 2) understand some of the main problems and methods that define the areas of 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* (8th Edition)**

**Edited by Perry, Bratman & Fischer, Oxford University Press, 2019.**

[Additional student resources for this textbook are available at: [www.oup.com/us/perry](http://www.oup.com/us/perry). On this website you will find practice quizzes for each of the readings in the textbook.]

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. Green Scantron forms, loose leaf paper, pen, and pencil for in-class writing assignments and quizzes.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) **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 the assigned texts carefully twice before you come to class. Each quiz is worth 2% of your final grade.

2) **Blackboard Exams (60%)**: There will be five Blackboard exams. Each exam will be available on Friday and due on Sunday. In order to prepare for these exams, you must 1) get in the habit of reading and re-reading the assigned texts carefully before you come to class, 2) take the practice quizzes that are available on our textbook publisher's website, and 3) participate regularly in class discussion. The exams may cover the assigned reading material (whether or not we discuss it in class) and/or class lecture and discussion (whether or not what we discuss in class appears in the assigned readings). Each exam will be given on Blackboard and will have a time limit. Here is the exam schedule:

**Exam #1 (10%)**: Available Sept. 6. Due Sept. 8. On material from weeks 1 and 2.

**Exam #2 (10%)**: Available Oct. 4. Due Oct. 6. On material from weeks 3-6.

**Exam #3 (10%)**: Available Oct. 25. Due Oct. 27. On material from weeks 7-9.

**Exam #4 (10%)**: Available Nov. 8. Due Nov. 10. On material from weeks 10 and 11.

**Exam #5 (20%)**: Available Dec 6. Due Dec. 8. On material from weeks 1-15.

Note: Late exams will not be accepted.

3) **In-Class Writing Assignments (10%)**: Periodically throughout the semester I will ask you to write short in-class assignments, which you will turn in at the end of 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.

4) **Essay Assignment (20%)**: You will write a 1250-1500 word essay on a topic selected from a list of topics. Topics and detailed instructions will be available on Oct. 1, and the essay will be due on Dec. 5.

## 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.

**Attendance Check-In:** Please check in before the start of class with your UTEP Miner Gold ID Cards. There are multiple readers outside of our classroom. To check in just swipe your ID card against the

reader. The system will beep and the light on the reader will change color temporarily (red to green for less than a second) if you successfully check in. The card reader's color will not change to "green", the color will only flash green for less than a second and the system will beep. You can check in no earlier than 15 minutes before the start of class.

**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.

**Accommodations:** 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 class 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** [NOTE: All of the readings below are in our textbook unless indicated otherwise.]

### **Week 1: Introduction**

Aug. 27: Syllabus; What is philosophy?

Aug. 29: *Introduction; Logical Toolkit*

### **Week 2: What is Philosophy?**

Sept. 3: *Apology* by Plato

Sept. 5: *The Value of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell; *Plato's Allegory of the Cave* by Plato

### **Week 3: Epistemology: What is Knowledge?**

Sept. 10: *Meditations on First Philosophy I* by René Descartes

Sept. 12: *Meditations on First Philosophy II* by René Descartes

#### **Week 4: Epistemology: What is Knowledge?**

Sept. 17: *Meditations on First Philosophy III* (also read supplemental handout on Blackboard) & *IV* by René Descartes

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

#### **Week 5: Epistemology: The JTB Theory and Its Problems**

Sept. 24: *Theaetetus* by Plato [Reading on Blackboard]

Sept. 26: *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?* by Edmund L. Gettier [Reading on Blackboard]; *Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?* by Lorraine Code [Reading on Blackboard]

#### **Week 6: Epistemology: The Problem of Induction**

Oct. 1: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume

Oct. 3: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume [continued]

#### **Week 7: Philosophy of Mind: Substance Dualism, Behaviorism and Materialism**

Oct. 8: Reread *Meditation VI* by Descartes; *Descartes's Myth* by Gilbert Ryle

Oct. 10: *The Nature of Mind* by David M. Armstrong

#### **Week 8: Philosophy of Mind: Functionalism and Artificial Intelligence**

Oct. 15: *Intentional Systems* by Daniel Dennett [Reading on Blackboard]

Oct. 17: *Minds, Brains, and Programs* by John Searle

#### **Week 9: Philosophy of Mind: What is Consciousness?**

Oct. 22: *What Is It Like to Be a Bat?* by Thomas Nagel [Reading on Blackboard]

Oct. 24: *What Mary Didn't Know* by Frank Jackson; *Are Mental States Irreducible to Neurobiological States?* by Patricia Churchland [Reading on Blackboard]

#### **Week 10: Metaphysics: Personal Identity**

Oct. 29: *The Self and the Future* by Bernard Williams; *Where Am I?* by Daniel Dennett

Oct. 31: *Personal Identity* by Derek Parfit

#### **Week 11: Metaphysics: Free Will and Responsibility**

Nov. 5: *The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will* by Peter van Inwagen

Nov. 7: *Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility* by Harry Frankfurt; *Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility* by Susan Wolf

**Week 12: Value Theory: Ethics**

Nov. 12: "Utilitarianism" by John Stuart Mill

Nov. 14: "Utilitarianism" by John Stuart Mill [continued]; "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" by Peter Singer

**Week 13: Value Theory: Ethics**

Nov. 19: "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" by Immanuel Kant

Nov. 21: "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" by Immanuel Kant [continued]

**Week 14: Value Theory: Ethics**

Nov. 26: "Nicomachean Ethics" by Aristotle

Nov. 28: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

**Week 15: Value Theory: The Meaning of Life**

Dec. 3: *The Meaning of Human Existence* by Richard Taylor

Dec. 5: *The Meanings of Lives* by Susan Wolf