Phil 1301: Introduction to Philosophy — Fall 2026

T/Th, 7:30 – 8:50, Texas Western Hall 400

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Office Hours	M: 10-11 am; T: 10-11 am; and by appointment		

Free and open discussion is the lifeblood of philosophy. Consequently, no student shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, disability, place of national origin, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, political affiliation, or any other similar factor. I expect all members of the class to be equally tolerant of differing perspectives and ideologies. Critique, evaluate and analyze the ideas put forward by me and others; do not demean or belittle them.

The word *philosophy* comes from the Greek words *philos* (love) and *sophos* (wisdom). So *philosophy* literally means the love of wisdom. And although philosophy is often thought of as an extremely impractical course of study, its emphasis on achieving wisdom suggests otherwise. Let me explain.

Each of us intuitively understands that there is a difference between someone who is wise and someone who is merely clever or intelligent or learned (educated). Hitler, for instance, was both intelligent and well-educated, but not wise; Mother Theresa on the other hand was wise, but not well-educated. Wisdom, therefore, is not the same as intelligence or cleverness or learnedness. What then does it mean to be wise?

At a minimum, a wise person is a person who can make good decisions about the course of his or her life. That is, good decisions about how to act—which paths to take and which paths not to take. This is the fundamental problem in philosophy: how should I live? What is the good life?

Course Objectives

Well … we aren't under any illusion that we can actually give you an answer to the basic philosophical question, "What is the good life?" Short of that, however, this class should provide you with a number of important practical skills that will help you to lead a better life. These include:

- An appreciation of a number of fundamental philosophical problems.
- Increased analytical and argumentative skills.
- A heightened awareness of the sorts of basic, often controversial, assumptions we all make on a routine basis and a nagging sense that maybe—just maybe—some of those assumptions are wrong!

As you can see, our goal is not to get you to internalize a bunch of philosophical doctrines. Rather, we want to get you to think critically and self-consciously about the world and your place in it. Doing this will of course require you to study a bit of philosophy—but that is the means, rather than the end.

Materials Required

Course Packet. Readings Posted to Blackboard

Lectures Notes: Posted to Blackboard

Evaluation

Please Note: There will be NO extra credit and there is no making up any assignment.

Six Module Quizzes (Online): Quizzes are worth 100 points each. 600 points total

10 unannounced in-class writing assignments graded Pass/Fail. 20 points each. (I will give more than 10 -- but you will only be graded on 10). 200 points total

Total Points: 800

The grading scale for this class is given below:

A	B	C	D	F	
≥90%	≥80%	≥70%	≥60%	<59.5%	(percentages)
720	719-640	639-560	559-480	≤479	(points)

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a concern for everyone. By joining the UTEP community every student agrees to abide by the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable to another person.

Cheating:

- Copying from the test paper of another student
- Communicating with another student during a test
- Giving or seeking aid from another student during a test
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during tests (i.e. Crib notes, class notes, books, etc)
- Substituting for another person to take a test
- Falsifying research data, reports, academic work offered for credit

Plagiarism

- Using someone's work in your assignments without the proper citations
- Submitting the same paper or assignment from a different course, without direct permission of instructors

Collusion

- Unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments

Class Schedule: The following is a detailed schedule of classes. The schedule, however, is flexible. I will freely amend it as time, interest, and comprehension dictate.

T	Aug. 25	Introduction

Module 1. Logic & Philosophical Analysis

Th	Aug. 27	Argument, Validity and Soundness
T	Sept. 1	Truth Tables and Logical Connectives
Th	Sept. 3	Basic Logic w/ Quantification
T	Sept. 8	Intuitions and Methodology
Th	Sept. 10	Modality & the Nature of Philosophical Analysis

Module 2. Epistemic Value (The Nature and Value of Knowledge)

T	Sept. 15	Knowledge and the Logic of Caring
Th	Sept. 17	Belief, Knowledge, and Justification
T	Sept. 22	Cartesian Skepticism
Th	Sept. 24	The Value of Knowledge
T	Sept. 29	Care, Understanding, & Wisdom

Module 3. Moral Value (Ethics)

Th	Oct. 1	Egoism & the Value of Well-Being
T	Oct. 6	Utilitarianism
Th	Oct. 8	Deontology
T	Oct. 13	Wisdom-Based Particularism

Module 4. Justice (Social/Political Value)

Th	Oct. 15	The Social Contract
T	Oct. 20	The Harm Principal
Th	Oct. 22	Distributive Justice I - Libertarianism
T	Oct. 27	Distributive Justice II – Neo-Liberalism
Th	Oct. 29	Distributive Justice III – Perfectionism & State Nuetrality

Module 5. Aesthetic Value

T	Nov. 3	Aesthetic Value & Objectivity
Th	Nov. 5	The Aesthetic Attitude
T	Nov. 10	Environmental Aesthetics
Th	Nov. 12	Aesthetics of Everyday Life

Module 6. Being Human, Free Will, and Meaning in Life

T	Nov. 17	Mind & Body
Th	Nov. 19	Personal Identity
T	Nov. 24	Free Will
Th	Nov. 26	Thanksgiving Holiday — No Class
T	Dec. 1	Meaning in Life
Th	Dec. 3	Evaluative Pluralism & Becoming Whole