

# Phil 1301: Introduction to Philosophy

Summer 2015, University of Texas, El Paso  
Class Meets: M-F 9:20—10:30 p.m., UGLC 336

## Contact Information

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*Free and open discussion is the life-blood 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.*

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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.

**Course Structure:** This course meets MWF. The final session each week is a designated group discussion day. On this day you will meet with a (smaller) group of students and turn in your reaction papers (see the section on "Evaluation" below). You should **come prepared** to discuss in detail, not only the specific material on which you wrote, but all of the material covered during the preceding week.

Although a certain amount of lecture time is necessary in order to present basic information, you should not feel that discussion is limited to discussion days. **Feel free to ask questions, request clarification, or raise objections at any time.** Indeed, you should **come primed for in class discussion every day.**

**Materials:**

Required

Laurence Bonjour & Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: Pearson Longman, 2008.

Optional

- **A good stiff cup of Joe!**

**Evaluation:**

- **Four Exams (25% of total grade EACH).** These exams will consist of a number of short answer and essays questions. Students may work together, but **must write their own answers.**

The grading scale for this class is given below:

A	B	C	D	F
>89.5%	>79.5%	>69.5%	>59.5%	≤59.5%

**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.

*RBA = A Rulebook for Arguments.*

*PhilProbs = Philosophical Problems.*

\*Please note that the assigned books are not really textbooks. The readings are designed to reinforce and complement lecture material, not replace it. Also, you are strongly encouraged to read the introductions to each chapter. In some places I have listed a few “suggested readings” for a section. In order to pass this course, it is not necessary to read this material. However, you will get much, much more out of the course if you do take the time to do the additional reading.

## **1. Logic, Analysis and Intuition**

Suggested Readings for this section:

Chapter 1: What is Philosophy?, *PhilProbs*

Baker, Intro to Philosophical Thinking, *PhilProbs*

*RBA* (yes, all of it; it is not that long!)

M	June. 08	Validity, Soundness & Argumentation Truth Tables and the Logical Connectives
		Lecture
T	June. 09	Argument Forms and Formal Fallacies Necessary & Sufficient Conditions
		Lecture.
W	June 10	Modal Logic, Analysis and Intuition
		Lecture

## **2. God, Faith, and Belief**

### **§2.1 A Priori Arguments for God’s Existence**

R	June 11	<b>Logic Exam</b>
		The Cosmological Argument Samuel Clarke, the Cosmological Argument, <i>PhilProbs</i> . David Hume, Problems with the Cosmological Argument, <i>PhilProbs</i> . St. Thomas Aquinas, the Five Ways, <i>PhilProbs</i> (optional)
F	June 12	The Ontological Argument René Descartes, The Ontological Argument, <i>PhilProbs</i> . Immanuel Kant, The Impossibility of an Ontological Proof, <i>PhilProbs</i> (optional)

### **§2.2 A Posteriori Arguments Concerning God’s Existence**

M	June 15	The Argument from Design William Paley, The Argument from Design, <i>PhilProbs</i> Stephen J. Gould, The Panda’s Thumb, <i>PhilProbs</i> David Hume, Problems with the Argument from Design, <i>PhilProbs</i>
		The Problem of Evil David Hume, The Problem of Evil, <i>PhilProbs</i> J. L. Mackie, Evil and Omniscience, <i>PhilProbs</i>

### §2.3 God's Existence and Faith

- T June 16 Pascal's Wager  
Walter Kaufmann, Pascal's Wager, *PhilProbs*
- Doxastic Voluntarism and the Ethics of Belief  
W. K. Clifford, the Ethics of Belief, *PhilProbs*

### 3. Ethics

#### §3.1 Meta-ethics

- W June 17 Ethical Relativism  
James Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism, *PhilProbs*
- Subjectivism vs. Objectivism  
James Rachels, Subjectivism in Ethics, *PhilProbs*  
Plato, Euthyphro, *PhilProbs*

#### §3.2 Ethical Theory

- R June 18 **Second Exam**
- Egoism  
Joel Feinberg, Psychological Egoism, *PhilProbs*  
James Rachels, Ethical Egoism, available from instructor.
- F June 19 Utilitarianism  
Jeremy Bentham, From An Intro to Principles of Morals and Legislation, *PhilProbs* (optional)  
J. S. Mill, From Utilitarianism, *PhilProbs*  
J. J. C. Smart, Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism, *PhilProbs*  
Bernard Williams, A Critique of Utilitarianism, *PhilProbs*
- M June 22 Deontology  
Immanuel Kant, From the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, *PhilProbs*
- T June 23 Virtue Ethics  
Aristotle, From the Nichomachean Ethics, *PhilProbs*  
Rosaling Hursthouse, Normative Virtue Ethics, *PhilProbs*

### 4. The Metaphysics of Persons

#### §4.1 Personal Identity

- W June 24 Unity of Consciousness  
John Locke, Personal Identity, *PhilProbs*  
Thomas Reid, Of Mr. Locke's Account of Personal Identity, *PhilProbs*
- Problems of Fission  
Bernard Williams, The Self and the Future, *PhilProbs*
- R June 25 **Third Exam**
- The Indeterminacy View  
Derek Parfit, Personal Identity, *PhilProbs*

### §4.2 The Mind/Body Problem

- F      June 28              The Mind/Body Problem  
          Keith Campbell, How the Mind-Body Problem Arises, *PhilProbs*
- The Identity Theory  
          J. J. C. Smart, Sensations and Brain Processes, *PhilProbs*
- M      June 30              Functionalism  
          A. M. Turing, Computing Machinery and Intelligence, *PhilProbs*  
          Jerry Fodor, The Mind-Body Problem, *PhilProbs*  
          Thomas Nagel, What is it like to be a bat?, *PhilProbs*  
          Frank Jackson, What Mary didn't Know, *PhilProbs*

## 5. Epistemology

### §5.1 What is Knowledge?

- T      July 01              Knowledge, Infallibilism and Skepticism  
          Rene Descartes, First Meditation, *PhilProbs*
- The Gettier Problem  
          Edmund Gettier, Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? On Blackboard
- W      July 02              Contextualism
- R      July 03              **Fourth Exam**