

**Course Outline**  
**PHIL 1200 – A05**  
**Introduction to Philosophy**

Tu Th 10:00 – 11:15

Room 312 Tier

Instructor: Patrick Walsh

Office: Room 440A University College

Office Hours: Mon. / Tues. - 13:00 – 14:00, or by appointment.

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**Brief Introduction:**

This course is designed to acquaint you with the terms, methods, and theories of several different areas within philosophy. This course provides an introduction to these general areas of philosophy: logic, epistemology (theory of knowledge), metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy.

These terms may sound very academic, but the issues and problems that will be the focus of our discussion are probably very familiar to you. For example, in epistemology we will discuss the problem of perception, and the problem of skepticism. Our discussions in metaphysics will engage many familiar topics like, the existence of God, free will and determinism, personal identity, and the mind–body problem. Some of the topics in ethics that we will discuss include moral relativism and egoism.

Our study in these, and other, areas will be based on classical readings from the western philosophical tradition in addition to the work of contemporary authors. The objective of this course is to provide a clear, systematic, and comprehensive introduction to the philosophical issues central to contemporary analytic philosophy.

**Required Text:**

Louis P. Pojman, Lewis Vaughn. **Philosophy The Quest for Truth.** Eighth Edition.  
(OUP: 2012) ISBN-13: 978-0-19-975179-2

\*\* You cannot expect to do well in this course if you do not have access to a copy of this text. \*\*

**Course Reading:**

In general, we will be following the presentation of our course text. As you will note, this text presents philosophy as a series of problems, or at least questions, to be addressed. So, in general outline, this course will involve us moving through a series of philosophical problems as presented by our course text.

I have a scheduled outline of the material we'll be discussing. This is only a tentative outline because the depth of our discussion on any given problem will be influenced by our collective interest in the problem. I'll ensure that we speak about the "basics" of each problem, but your class participation will determine how thoroughly we engage a particular problem.

### **Tentative Reading Timetable:**

*(Please note that although every effort will be made to cover the material as it is listed below during class/lecture, this may not always be possible due to time constraints or unforeseen schedule changes.)*

Sept 8 – Course Introduction,  
Sept 13, 15 – Course text: Part I  
Sept 20, 22 – Course text: Part I / II  
Sept 27, 29 – Course text: Part II  
Oct 4, 6 – Course text: Part II  
Oct 11, **13** – Course text: Part II  
Oct 18, 20 – Course text: Part III  
Oct 25, 27 – Course text: Part III  
Nov 1, 3 – Course text: Part III  
Nov **8**, 10 Course text: Part III  
Nov 15, 17 – Course text: Part IV  
Nov 22, 24 – Course text: Part IV  
Nov 29, Dec 1 – Course text: Part IV  
Dec **6** – Course text: Part IV  
Jan 5 – Course text: Part V  
Jan 10, 12 – Course text: Part V  
Jan 17, 19 – Course text: Part V  
Jan 24, **26** – Course text: Part V  
Jan 31, Feb 2 - Course text: Part VI  
Feb 7, 9 – Course text: Part VI  
Feb 14, 16 - Course text: Part VI  
**Feb 20 - 24 – Mid term Break – No classes.**  
Feb 28, Mar 1 – Course text: Part VI  
Mar 6, 8 – Course text: Part VI  
Mar **13**, 15 - Course text: Part VII  
Mar 20, 22 – Course text: Part VII  
Mar 27, 29 – Course text: Part VII / VIII  
Apr 3, **5** - Course text: Part VIII

**The last date to withdraw from this course without academic penalty  
Friday, March 16, 2012.**

### **Evaluation:**

**The evaluation for this course will involve 6 pieces of work.** These pieces of work can consist of two parts; an in-class test portion and a take home assignment portion. First, there will be an assignment portion that you prepare and hand in, on the test day, with the completed in-class test. Second, the in-class test portion will consist of short answer questions each requiring answers of 2-3 paragraphs. The assignment portion will be comprised of 1 or 2 short essay questions. I consider a response to a short essay question to require approx. 2-3 pages (i.e. 1000 words maximum). The questions for the short essay will be handed out in class approx. 2 weeks prior to its due date (i.e. the test date). The composition of each test/assignment may vary from topic to topic.

### **Short Essay Questions – What They Are All About:**

The purpose of a philosophical question is to inquire into the reasons in support of a position. Indeed, some philosophers contend that the answer to a philosophical question is of less importance than the reasons offered in support of the answer. Other philosophers will point out that that is a characteristic of a philosophical question.

The questions I ask usually follow a particular pattern. First, I'll ask for some explanation of a position or an argument from a particular author. (Note: this will be your link to the required reading.) I'll then ask for a criticism or objection to that position or argument. (This will probably also be found in the required readings.) Then I'll ask for your assessment of the criticism and the position. In most cases, either you'll support the criticism or the original position. In either case, what is important is the reasons you have in support of your assessment (i.e. the reasons in support of your conclusion).

So, when it comes to your reasoned assessment, I'm not looking for a particular answer. I'm more concerned with your reasons in two ways. First, that you provide reasons in support of your answer and, secondly, the quality of the evidential support that those reasons provide. In short, I'm looking for your argument.

This is a job that you should be able to do in 1000 words - maximum. So, being concise is a virtue. The questions are not designed to be the basis for a research paper. Focus immediately on the question. A lengthy introduction that makes commentary on all aspects the issue and their perceived importance isn't required. Part of your task in responding to the question is filtering out material that is not relevant. Due to the size of the class, I cannot look through rough drafts before the due date though I am more than happy to answer any questions you have. Here are some tips on how to structure your answer.

Introductory paragraph: Tell the reader what your response contains. In this sense, be specific – do not say merely “I am going to raise an objection to Walsh” or (worse) “I am going to discuss Walsh.” Instead say what the objection/reply is going to be. Avoid the wasteful descent into the particular, e.g., “Philosophers have long pondered the ethics of warfare. One of the most popular topics has been just war theory. Walsh claims...” To ensure that the introduction correctly describes the paper, you might consider writing it last.

Exposition: Focus on accurately explaining the argument or position the question asks you to explain. While doing this, you might keep in mind the particular objection you will also be explaining. It is beneficial to be able to clearly show how the objection is relevant.

Your Assessment: Your assessment should, to some degree, find you in agreement with either the original position/argument or the objection to it. This should be clearly expressed, and most importantly your reasons in support of your assessment must be clearly articulated. Do not simply give a list of objections – give one and develop it.

Conclusion: Tell the reader what you have argued. Do not introduce new thoughts here – No surprises.

### **Summary Schedule of Course Work:**

<b><u>Item</u></b>	<b><u>Tentative Due Date</u></b>	<b><u>% of Final Grade</u></b>
Test / Assignments	Oct. 13, Nov 8, Dec 6 Jan 26, Mar 13, Apr 5	<u>Equally weighted</u>
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

### **Grades**

In this course (though not necessarily in any other course in the Department of Philosophy) the following equivalence between letter grades and percentages is used:

A+ - 95-100	A - 85-95	B+ - 80-85	B - 70-80
C+ - 65-70	C - 55-65	D - 45-55	F - 0-45

### **Additional Points**

Students will be responsible for all reading, lecture, and discussion material, so attendance is crucial. I routinely use PowerPoint. As presentations, they are intended as guides to our class discussion and to facilitate your note-taking. As well, the readings must be completed for the assigned date to maximize the effect of our discussion. Discussion is an important part of any philosophy class. Presenting your ideas, either as a response to a question or as a question, gives you an opportunity to organize and develop your thoughts. Although no marks are directly awarded for class participation, one of the goals of this course is to enhance your skills of analytic reasoning and debate. This happens in the classroom. These skills will assist you in tackling the written coursework. As an end state, these skills should enable you to think more clearly and debate more effectively on intellectual issues in general.

Extensions for assignments or make-up tests will not normally be granted except on compassionate grounds (medical excuse, death in the family, etc.) Requests for an extension or make-up test must be made directly to me, prior to the date in question, together with appropriate documentation (e.g., doctor's note).

Students are also required to be aware of the University's policy regarding plagiarism and abide by it. Simply put, plagiarism is when you present somebody else's work as your own. This can be achieved by copying someone's essay, in whole or in part, and submitting it, or by copying someone's work during a test or an exam sitting.

**Penalties for Plagiarism:** The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism in a written assignment, test, or examination is F on the paper and F for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as the purchase of an essay or cheating on a test or examination, the penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty. The faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

Please also see section 7 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements in your Undergraduate Calendar for information concerning plagiarism and cheating. However, if you are ever uncertain about the academic honesty of anything you are doing for the course, please talk to me. A little conversation can save a lot of pain and complication for both of us.

### **Other Information:**

#### 1. U of M Students Rights and Responsibilities

- To practice personal and academic integrity;
- To respect the dignity and individuality of all persons;
- To respect the rights and property of others;
- To take responsibility for one's own personal and academic commitments;
- To contribute to our community for fair, cooperative and honest inquiry and learning;
- To respect and strive to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions;
- To refrain from and discourage behaviour which threatens the freedom and respect that others deserve.

#### 2. Diversity/Equity Services

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, or have a disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you should discuss these issues with your instructor and/or one of the following Student Affairs offices as soon as possible:

- Disability Services, 155 University Centre, Ph: 474-6213 (voice), 474-9690 (TTY)
- Student Counselling and Career Centre, 474 University Centre, Ph: 474-8592