

**PHIL 1200 A04: Introduction to Philosophy. MWF 12:30 – 1:20**

**Instructor:** Dimitrios Dentsoras

**Office:** 445 University College

**Email:** dentsora[at]cc[dot]umanitoba[dot]ca

**Office hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30, or by appointment.

**Course Description:**

The course is designed to give a broad introduction to some of philosophy's most persistent and engaging problems. Is there a god? How can we be sure that we know something? Does free will exist? What makes an action moral or immoral?

We will approach these issues from a mix of contemporary and historical perspectives, with the goal of developing the skills necessary for evaluating arguments and convincingly presenting one's own opinions.

Philosophical works are often perceived as confusingly dense or downright obscure. Yet, many of them are ingenious attempts to answer questions that have persistently troubled the greatest minds of every generation. In this context, the study of philosophy can be a rewarding experience. In this course we will examine and try to understand some of the most influential ideas and thinkers, from Aristotle to Mill, that have shaped our modern world views. At the same time, we will try to discover the value of philosophy by critically evaluating the problems that it poses and the solutions that it offers.

We will begin the Fall Term by discussing the existence of god and the problem of evil as a challenge to the existence of a supremely benevolent power. We will then move to problems related to the Theory of Knowledge, focusing on epistemic skepticism and on possible ways to defeat it. In the third part of the Fall Term, we will discuss questions related to the mind-body problem and consciousness.

In the Winter Term, we will begin by discussing the conflict between free will and determinism; we will then discuss various theories of morality, and attempt to determine what can serve as a suitable basis for making moral judgments. Finally, we will end by investigating the relationship between society and morality, and the concept of justice that arises out of this relationship.

**Textbook (required):**

Perry J., Bratman M., Fischer J. M. (eds.) *Introduction to Philosophy* Oxford UP: 2007

A number of additional articles will also be placed on the course's ANGEL website.

**Assignments/evaluation:**

The assignments for this course are:

- *Two in-class exams*, administered approximately at the middle of Fall Term and the middle of Winter Term, each worth 15% of the final grade
- *Two final exams* administered during the Exam Periods of the Fall and the Winter Terms, each covering the material taught in its respective term, and each worth 20% of the final grade
- *Six short response papers* (two pages each), three for each term, worth cumulatively 30% of the final grade (5% for each short paper)

The grade distribution for this course (though not necessarily others courses in the Philosophy Department) will be the following:

A+: 95-100	B+: 80-84	C+: 65-69	D: 45-54
A: 85-94	B: 70-79	C: 55-64	F: 0-44