

**University of Manitoba – Department of Philosophy**  
**PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE**  
**PHIL 1420–A01 – Fall 2020**  
CNR 19981  
Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> – Dec 11<sup>th</sup> (lecture period)

Professor:	Simone Mahrenholz
Online-Class-Times:	Tue/Thu 1:00 pm -2:15 pm
Classroom:	Remote teaching via ZOOM
Email:	<a href="mailto:simone.mahrenholz@umanitoba.ca">simone.mahrenholz@umanitoba.ca</a>
Office Hours:	Wed. 12:00 pm.-1:00 p.m. or upon request Time slots to be booked on UMLearn (Wed. Sept. 23 <sup>rd</sup> no office hours)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Philosophy, whose name means love of wisdom (greek: *φιλο-σοφία: philo-sophia*), implied in its ancient forms a wisdom regarding also our ways of living: the existential challenges of being human. Philosophy as a way of life thus implies forms of self-therapy, self-transformation or self-education in the face of challenges and threatening emotions such as anxiety, depression or nihilistic vertigo. The overarching idea of self-formation is a very old one, mirroring contemporary ideas of self-optimization (without having very much in common with it).

In recent decades, this exciting and highly relevant tradition of philosophy has been reactivated, adding to the theoretical question of “what can I know?” also reflections on: “How should I live?” This form of practical philosophy is wider than traditional ethics or morality, implying also general discussions such as: What is the art of living? How can we lead a good life: blissful, wise, just? What gives humans peace of mind in the face of emergencies? What principles should we follow in our actions, and why? How to deal with death, devastating loss, or scary, self-destructive emotions, behaviour or habits? How can we *overcome* ourselves? While this original dimension of philosophy has historically been overtaken by religion, psychology and psychotherapy, it has never quite vanished. In this course we will read and discuss some of the crucial authors, texts, traditions and ideas with regard to philosophy as a way of life: from antiquity until contemporary philosophy. We will also address some of the connections between this tradition and current techniques of self-mastery, such as mindfulness, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and philosophical techniques in general that aim at self-understanding.

## COURSE ORGANIZATION

The course will take place online at the assigned class-times. It will revolve around the reading and discussion of a series of great and at times difficult texts. Material will be made available electronically on UMLearn or is available online, with the exception of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, which has to be purchased (see below under required texts). It is vital that you attend class having read the assigned material and are ready to discuss it. Among the most productive responses to philosophical texts are questions. Thus, always take notes while reading: noting what is unclear or where you disagree, and address these points in the group or in class-blog-entries. When taking notes, make sure to also write down the *source* that your quote, idea, or question originates from (text, page-number or paragraph), thus having it ready for reference during discussion, or for your blog-entries, or later for your writing-assignments. Much class-time will be devoted to discussion; the more actively you participate, the more fun, entertaining and rewarding it will be for you – which will also be reflected in your grades.

Participation in discussions and blog-entries will be evaluated primarily on the basis of continuous commitment and intellectual and personal engagement. The course aims at providing a protected space of mutual trust that encourages an open exchange of ideas and positions. 'Mistakes' are not something to be avoided by all means, rather they often contain the potential for growth for the whole group.

In general you are expected to:

- attend each online-class, having the assigned text and your notes ready at hand
- check your Umanitoba-email-account on a daily basis
- check the course-webpage on UMLearn regularly after class for the latest assignments
- upload weekly responses to the readings on the course-blog on UMLearn under: *communication-discussion-forum* and the current *topic* (details t.b.a)

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, participants know several of the key authors, questions, texts, traditions and terminology of past and contemporary philosophy regarding Philosophy as a Way of Life. They are familiar with the technique of close reading, of analyzing the meaning of texts and of (re)constructing philosophical arguments in speaking and writing. They are able to critically formulate questions and discuss possible positions in response: in the online-classroom as well as in written form. They interact attentively and in a supportive manner with their classmates during discussions. And they are capable to reflect on their own lives, thoughts and existence on the basis of philosophical readings and discussions and give their reflections a voice.

## PROGRAM

The program and the readings assigned for each upcoming session will be announced in class and in the assignment sheet section on UMLearn. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to send me an email. (On proper email-etiquette, see section below.)

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Most of the texts and other teaching material will be uploaded on UMLearn or will be available online. You need to purchase a copy of:

Marcus Aurelius: Meditations. Penguin UK, Mass Market Paperback,  
ISBN-13: 978-0141018829 978 (in stock at the U of M Bookstore).

## FINAL GRADE, IMPORTANT DATES

Regular attendance in online-class-sessions	10 %
Oral participation in class-discussions	10 %
Weekly short comments or writing assignments (1/2 - 1 page)	25 %
Deadline and details t.b.a., to be uploaded on the class-blog on UMLearn	
Essay/Test 1 (about 4 pages, <b>due Oct. 13<sup>th</sup></b> with 3 days writing time)	20 %
Essay/Test 2 (about 3 pages, <b>due Nov 3 or 4</b> , with 3 days writing time)	15 %
Final Essay (Essay 3) <b>due Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m.</b> ), 2 weeks writing time)	20 %
There is no final exam.	

### Grading Scale

A+: 90-100	A: 80-89	B+: 75-79	B: 67-74
C+: 60-66	C: 50-59	D: 45-49	F: 0-44

Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	
A+	4.5	Exceptional
A	4.0	Excellent
B+	3.5	Very Good
B	3.0	Good
C+	2.5	Satisfactory
C	2.0	Adequate
D	1.0	Marginal
F	0	Failure

### **MISSED DEADLINES FOR COURSEWORK**

If you are unable to meet a course requirement within the given deadline due to medical circumstances, you are currently not required to submit medical notes. However, you need to inform me as soon as possible (within 48 hours) by email from your U of M email address, including your full name, student number and course number, informing me of the missed work, in order to make arrangements for extensions, deferrals, or make-up assignments.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Regular on-line attendance is expected for all sessions.

### **CLASS ETIQUETTE**

While on Zoom, please mute your microphone and un-mute it when you speak. Electronic devices such as phones should be kept away during class-time. Try to remain in front of the camera and not wander around during class time (else you will distract me and the group). Have your assigned reading material (or textbook) and your reading notes at hand in all class sessions.

### **EMAIL-ETIQUETTE**

Address me directly by name and sign with your full name. Otherwise I will not respond. In the subject line of the message, include the course number and the subject of your email.

### **A NOTE ON RECORDING CLASSES**

Unless a student has a medical reason for doing so, recording classes is prohibited.

### **A NOTE ON SHARING COURSE MATERIALS**

Sharing of course materials provided by myself as well as assignment and exam questions is prohibited, unless otherwise stated. This means also that you are not allowed to upload the instructor's intellectual property to a note-sharing or tutoring website without explicit permission.

### **PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Formal written assignments such as take-home tests or essays must include the following statement on the title page:

"In accordance with the Honor Code, I affirm that this work is my own and all content taken from other sources has been properly acknowledged."

In cases of uncertainty, check out this webpage with helpful practical information:

<http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/academic-supports/academic-integrity>

**Plagiarism or cheating will result in an F for the assignment, and may carry additional penalties as per university policy.** Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam personation (hiring others to write your class-papers or tests), academic fraud, inappropriate collaboration, and duplicate submission (see link above). All of these are in violation of the Student Discipline Bylaw and will lead to serious [disciplinary action](#). Visit the [Academic Calendar](#), [Student Advocacy](#), and [Academic Integrity](#) web pages for more information and support. – If you are ever uncertain about academic honesty of anything you are doing for the course, please do not hesitate to ask me.

### **WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE**

The last date for voluntary withdrawal is **Monday, November 23th, 2020.**

### **LATE POLICY**

See above under missed deadlines for course work

### **HELP IN AN EMERGENCY**

Please make use of the information on this website:

<http://umanitoba.ca/student/mentalhealth/>

If one of them is not successful or helpful, try another one. You can also talk to me confidentially during my online-office hours or make an extra appointment with me.