

## INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

**PROFESSOR:** Dr. Blake Hereth (“Dr. H”)

**PRONOUNS:** they/them

**EMAIL:** [Blake\\_Hereth@uml.edu](mailto:Blake_Hereth@uml.edu)

**OFFICE:** Dugan Hall 200L

**CLASS MEETINGS:** MWF 10:00-10:50am in Dugan Hall 102

**E-OFFICE:** Collaborate Ultra (Blackboard)

**E-STUDENT HOURS:** Tuesday/Thursday 10:00-10:50am and by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Thales claims that the universe consisted entirely of water. Socrates says that the unexamined life isn't worth living. Aquinas believes each thing has a 'proper' function. And Chalmers thinks your iPhone is part of your mind. Are any of them right? How would we even go about finding out? This course introduces you to some big ideas in historical and contemporary philosophy—not just the old, dusty stuff, but the new, cutting-edge stuff. Beginning with methodology, we will cover a little bit of everything from ‘Do we know anything at all?’ to ‘Should we use gender-neutral pronouns for everyone?’ But this course is more than an introduction to these issues. It's also an invitation for you to contribute to the millennia-old enterprise of asking big questions and questioning big answers.

### ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES (ELOs)

- Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving (CTPS): This course meets the Core Curriculum Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Essential Learning Outcome; it provides students with the opportunity to practice fundamental intellectual skills for approaching problems and evaluating evidence in order to develop solutions and draw informed conclusions.

### COURSE GOALS:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- understand and execute basic logical operations;
- associate major historical and contemporary philosophers with their big ideas;
- explain the big ideas, why they matter, and what can be said in support of them; and
- develop a big idea of their own and provide strong, original support for it.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class Participation (15%): Class will be held face-to-face in Dugan Hall 102. Watch/read/listen to the required and content carefully and come prepared to discuss it. Then, when in online class, discuss it. You won't receive credit just for being present.

- Content Quizzes (20%): There will be random quizzes over class content. These may be questions about the (required) readings, in-class PowerPoints, podcasts, videos, or other content introduced during class. The lowest two quizzes will be dropped.
- Midterm Exam (20%): an exam covering material from the first half of the course. The exam will be held in class on Friday, October 14th, during regular class time.
- Term Paper (25%): Each student will develop a 5-page, double-spaced paper that develops an original philosophical objection to one of the arguments we have addressed in the course. The paper is due Friday, December 16th, at 5pm on Blackboard.
- Final Exam (20%): an exam covering material from the second half of the course. The exam will be held in class on Monday, December 19th, from 9-11am.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

I use a standard grading scale for this course:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89.99%
- C = 70-79.99%
- D = 60-69.99%
- F = 59.99 or below

### **TEXTBOOK(S):**

- There is no textbook for this course. (Yay! Saving money!) All the readings are on Blackboard.

### **SPOTIFY LOGIN INFORMATION:**

- Email: [sbhereth@uark.edu](mailto:sbhereth@uark.edu)
- Password: **philosophypodcast**

### **CONTENT WARNING:**

Many of the issues to be addressed in this course are potentially triggering. Some readings include discussions of gaslighting, abortion, sexual assault, white supremacy, mental illness stigma, and virtual pedophilia. Some class discussions on these topics are also potentially triggering. If you are concerned about being triggered by a particular topic or discussion, please contact me and I will excuse you from that day's class without penalty. If there is anything I can do to make the content or classroom environment less triggering, please contact me about that, as well, and I will try to make improvements. Your mental health is of prime importance to me.

### **SCHEDULE:**

**(NOTE: THIS IS A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE. I MAY ADJUST IT DEPENDING ON NEED OR CLASS PROGRESS.)**

WEEK 1 (SEP 2): COURSE INTRODUCTION

Readings:

- Syllabus
- Philosophy Survey

WEEK 2 (SEP 5, 7, 9): VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

Readings:

- **No class Monday, September 5th (Labor Day)**
- Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
- **No class Friday, September 9th (Dr. H at a conference)**

WEEK 3 (SEP 12, 14, 16): VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY & LOGIC

Readings:

- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII
- Kristie Dotson, “How is This Paper Philosophy?”
- Logic Handouts

WEEK 4 (SEP 19, 21, 23): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditation I (pp.6-8)
- **Watch:** Jennifer Nagel, “Three Responses to Skepticism”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/xehTcQeqDWs>
- Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

WEEK 5 (SEP 26, 28, 30): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- Richard Feldman, *Epistemology*
- **Listen:** Miranda Fricker, “On Testimony and the Power of Words”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/VpnrEErB-r8>
- Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias” (sections 1 and 2)

WEEK 6 (OCT 3, 5, 7): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- Earl Conee, “Universals”
- Peter van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings”
- Mari Mikkola, “Feminist Metaphysics and Philosophical Methodology”

WEEK 7 (OCT 10, 11, 12, 14): MIDTERM PREP & EXAM

Readings:

- **No class Monday, October 10th (Indigenous Peoples Day); class will be held Tuesday, October 11th, at the usual time and place**
- Theodore Sider, “Time”
- **Wednesday will be devoted to prepping for the Midterm Exam**
- **The Midterm Exam will be held Friday, October 14th, during regular class time**

WEEK 8 (OCT 17, 19, 21): PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Readings:

- “Correspondence Between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth”
- Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”
- Eric Funkhouser, “Do the Self-Deceived Get What They Want?”

WEEK 9 (OCT 24, 26, 28): ETHICS

Readings:

- Introducing Ethics: The Trolley Problem (**Lecture only**)

- Timothy Hsiao, “How to Think About the Gun Control Debate”
- Morgan Luck, “The Gamer’s Dilemma”

WEEK 10 (OCT 31, NOV 2, 4): ETHICS

Readings:

- **Listen:** Kate Manne, “HIMpathy”
  - **The UnMute Podcast Link:** <https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-035-kate-manne-on-himpathy/>
- Anne Barnhill, “Just Pushy Enough”
- Julie Kirsch, “Is Abortion a Question of Personal Morality?”

WEEK 11 (NOV 7, 9, 11): ETHICS & PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Readings:

- John Robertson, “Preconception Gender Selection” (**Lecture Only**)
- **Watch:** Timothy Yenter, “Cosmological Argument: Parts I and II”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/2zS1HiuWPMA>
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/mBMAMIFw9n4>
- **There is no class Friday, November 11th (Veteran’s Day)**

WEEK 12 (NOV 14, 16, 18): PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Readings:

- **Watch:** Susanna Rinard, “Pascal’s Wager”
  - **YouTube Link:** [https://youtu.be/2F\\_LUFIeUk0](https://youtu.be/2F_LUFIeUk0)
- Nick Trakakis, “The Evidential Problem of Evil” (available online)

WEEK 13 (NOV 21, 23, 25): PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION + THANKSGIVING!

Readings:

- Kathryn Pogin, “God is Not Male”
- **No class Wednesday, November 23rd, or Friday, November 25th (Thanksgiving)**

WEEK 14 (NOV 28, 30, DEC 2): PHILOSOPHY OF RACE

Readings:

- **Listen:** Luvell Anderson, “Slurs”
  - **The UnMute Podcast Link:** <https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-014-luvell-anderson-on-slurs/>
- Travis Timmerman, “A Case for Removing Confederate Monuments”
- **Listen:** Linda Martín Alcoff, “Whiteness”
  - **The UnMute Podcast Link:** <https://unmutetalk.podbean.com/e/episode-018-linda-alcoff-on-whiteness/>

WEEK 15 (DEC 5, 7, 9): PHILOSOPHY OF DISABILITY & SEX, GENDER

Readings:

- Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body*, chapter 2 (pp.54-77)
- Abigail Gosselin, “Mental Illness Stigma and Epistemic Credibility”
- John Corvino, “Homosexuality, Harm, and Moral Principles”

WEEK 16 (DEC 12, 14, 16): PHILOSOPHY OF SEX & GENDER + FINALS WEEK!

Readings:

- Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze” (sections 1, 2, and 4)
- **Optional Final Exam Study Session on Wednesday**
- **Optional #PuppyTherapy on Friday, December 16th, 12-4pm in my office (Dugan 200L)**
- **Term Paper due Friday, December 16th, at 5pm on Blackboard**

WEEK 17 (DEC 19): FINAL EXAM

Readings:

- **The Final Exam will be held Monday, December 19th, 9-11am, in our regular classroom**

**POLICIES:**

- Respect of Self and Others: As a (mostly) consistent Kantian, I expect everyone in this course to maintain a certain level of self-respect. This means taking yourself seriously (although not *too* seriously) and avoiding excessive self-deprecation. You are valuable and an important part of the philosophical community. I also expect everyone in this course to maintain respect for others. Philosophical engagement is often aggressive and it’s easy to see why: Sometimes you develop a devastating objection to someone’s argument and you want to deliver it in epic fashion. But we won’t indulge those impulses here. It’s okay to care about the material and to discuss it passionately, but *don’t* interrupt others, *do* be equitable with your speaking time (and be aware that we’re often bad judges of when we’ve exceeded our equitable speaking time), *do* aim to help someone identify any flaws in their view *and* make suggestions for how they might improve it, and *do* respect others’ pronouns.
- Student Hours: At the top of this syllabus, you will see a list of ‘student hours.’ Those are times I set aside just for you. During that time, I will be available to you via Blackboard’s online Collaborate Ultra feature. Signing in is easy: Log into Blackboard, select our course, click the “Collaborate Ultra” tab on the left, click “Course Room,” then click “Join Course Room.” Stop by to ask questions, get clarity on an assignment, brainstorm your paper, talk philosophy, tell me about yourself, or get some encouragement. (College is hard—it was *very* hard for me—and there’s zero shame in that.) If you want to meet with me face-to-face, email me to make an appointment and we’ll pick a time to meet in my Dugan 200L office.
- Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly, as regular attendance is one of the most important contributors to student success. However, students may occasionally need to miss class due to illness, emergency, or caring for a sick family member. In such cases, you are responsible for notifying me of your absences and working with me to arrange to make up any missed work. I will be very accommodating to students who are experiencing pandemic-related challenges, but you must communicate your requests with me regularly and with as much advance-notice as possible. Likewise, if I should need to miss class, I will communicate with you as soon as possible with clear instructions.
- Tutoring Resources and Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS): CLASS will be offering [tutoring](#) and [Writing Center](#) services both in-person and virtually.
- Student Mental Health and Well-being: We are a campus that cares about the mental health and well-being of all individuals in our campus community, particularly during this uncertain time. If you or someone you know are experiencing mental health challenges at

UMass Lowell, please contact [Counseling Services](#). They will be offering free in-person counselling for all students.

- **Disability Services:** If you have a documented disability that will require classroom accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible, so that we might make appropriate arrangements. Please speak to me during office hours or send me an email, as I respect, and want to protect, your privacy. Visit the [Student Disability Services webpage](#) for further information. Additionally, Student Disability Services supports software for ALL students. Read&Write Gold is literacy software that allows you to read on-screen text aloud, research and check written work, and create study guides. You can download the software from the IT Software webpage on the UML website: [IT Software page](#)
- **Diversity, Inclusion, and Classroom Community Standards:** UMass Lowell—and your professor—value human diversity in all its forms, whether expressed through race and ethnicity, culture, political and social views, religious and spiritual beliefs, language and geographic characteristics, gender, gender identities and sexual orientations, learning and physical abilities, age, parenting status and social or economic backgrounds. I am committed to conducting my classroom in a way that respects and values diversity of all kinds, and I encourage you also to enrich yourself by practicing respect in your interactions, and enrich one another by expressing your point of view, knowing that diversity and individual differences are respected, appreciated, and recognized as a source of strength.
- **Academic Integrity Policy:** All students are advised that there is a [University policy regarding academic integrity](#). Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work.
- **Credit Hour Policy:** Federal definition of a credit hour requires that for every course credit awarded, a course must offer 15 hours of instructor-led course activities and 30 hours of out-of-class student work. This means that a standard 3 credit hour course requires 45 hours of instructor-led course activities and 90 hours of out-of-class student work.
- **University Privacy Statement:** UMass Lowell recognizes the importance of mutual trust between students and faculty. Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record someone without their permission. Recordings of classroom lectures are the intellectual property of the instructor. Instructors have the right to prohibit audio and video recording of their lectures, unless the requesting student is registered with Disabilities Services and recording of class sessions is an approved accommodation. In addition, sharing or selling recordings of classroom activities, discussions or lectures with any other person or medium without permission of the instructor is prohibited.
- **Health and Safety:** The safety and health of the UMass Lowell community is our shared priority. In seeking to provide the fullest academic and campus life experience possible, UMass Lowell will rely on all members of our community to act responsibly. For the latest updates on UMass Lowell's COVID policies, please visit [www.uml.edu/coronavirus](http://www.uml.edu/coronavirus). UMass Lowell has implemented reasonable health and safety protocols in accordance with national and state public health guidelines. These standards apply to anyone who is physically present on campus or participating in a UMass Lowell-sponsored activity.
  - **Daily Symptom Checker:** All campus community members should use the [daily symptom checker](http://www.uml.edu/alert/coronavirus/COVID-19-symptom-review.aspx) ([www.uml.edu/alert/coronavirus/COVID-19-symptom-review.aspx](http://www.uml.edu/alert/coronavirus/COVID-19-symptom-review.aspx)) every day prior to leaving your home, apartment, or room.

- **Vaccination:** COVID-19 vaccination is required for ALL students (with rare and approved exceptions). Please visit the Massachusetts Vaccine Finder website ([vaxfinder.mass.gov](https://vaxfinder.mass.gov)) to find vaccine locations.
- **Face Coverings:** Face coverings are required for all faculty, staff, students, vendors and visitors regardless of vaccination status in nearly all indoor common spaces, including classrooms, instructional laboratories, meeting rooms, work areas, break rooms, hallways, elevators and restrooms. Face coverings are not required outdoors. Faculty may opt to remove face coverings when teaching.
- Problems with the Course: If you have concerns or suggestions regarding this course, I encourage you to speak to me directly about them. (I will also give you ample opportunities to provide feedback, which I value.) If you would prefer to speak with someone else, however, you may contact:
  - Dr. Nicholas Evans
  - Chair, Department of Philosophy
  - Dugan Hall 200F
  - 978-934-3996
  - [Nicholas\\_Evans@uml.edu](mailto:Nicholas_Evans@uml.edu)