

## HONORS INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PROFESSOR: Dr. Blake Hereth (“Dr. H”)

PRONOUNS: ze/zir or they/them

EMAIL: [sbhereth@uark.edu](mailto:sbhereth@uark.edu)

E-OFFICE: Collaborate Ultra (Blackboard)

E-CLASS MEETINGS: MWF 9:40am-10:30am via Collaborate Ultra

E-STUDENT HOURS: TTh 10am-12pm via Collaborate Ultra 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.

### 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 endeavor to make improvements. Your mental health is of prime importance to me.

### COURSE GOALS:

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

- 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 support for it.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- Class Participation (15%): Class will be held in Blackboard's Collaborate Ultra feature. 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 on Blackboard on Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 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 Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 5pm on Blackboard.
- Final Exam (20%): an exam covering material from the second half of the course. The exam will be held on Blackboard on **DATE AND TIME TBD**.

### 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**

### SCHEDULE:

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

WEEK 1 (JAN 11, 13, 15): COURSE INTRODUCTION

Readings:

- Syllabus
- Philosophy Survey
- Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”

WEEK 2 (JAN 18, 20, 22): VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

Readings:

- **There is no class Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup> (MLK Day)**
- Plato, *Republic*, Book VII
- Kristie Dotson, “How is This Paper Philosophy?”

WEEK 3 (JAN 25, 27, 29): LOGIC & EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- Logic Handouts
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditation I (pp.6-8)

- **Watch:** Jennifer Nagel, “Three Responses to Skepticism”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/xehTcQeqDWS>

WEEK 4 (FEB 1, 3, 5): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
- Richard Feldman, *Epistemology*

WEEK 5 (FEB 8, 10, 12): EPISTEMOLOGY

Readings:

- Phyllis Rooney, “Gendered Reason: Sex Metaphor and Conceptions of Reason”
- **Listen:** Miranda Fricker, “On Testimony and the Power of Words”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/VpnzEErB-r8>
- Daniel Kelly and Erica Roedder, “Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias” (sections 1 and 2)

WEEK 6 (FEB 15, 17, 19): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- Earl Conee, “Universals”
- Peter van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings”

WEEK 7 (FEB 22, 24, 26): METAPHYSICS

Readings:

- **There is no class Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> (Spring Break I)**
- Mari Mikkola, “Feminist Metaphysics and Philosophical Methodology”
- Theodore Sider, “Time”

WEEK 8 (MAR 1, 3, 5): MIDTERM EXAM PREP + MIDTERM EXAM

Readings:

- **Monday and Wednesday will be devoted to prepping for the Midterm Exam.**
- **The Midterm Exam will be held Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, during regular class time**

WEEK 9 (MAR 8, 10, 12): 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 10 (MAR 15, 17, 19): PHILOSOPHY OF MIND & 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 11 (MAR 22, 24, 26): 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”
- **There is no class Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup> (Spring Break II)**

WEEK 12 (MAR 29, 31, APR 2): ETHICS

Readings:

- Julie Kirsch, “Is Abortion a Question of Personal Morality?”
- John Robertson, “Preconception Gender Selection” (**Lecture Only**)
- **There is no class Friday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> (Spring Break III)**

WEEK 13 (APR 5, 7, 9): PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Readings:

- **Watch:** Timothy Yenter, “Cosmological Argument: Parts I and II”
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/2zS1HiuWPMA>
  - **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/mBMAMIFw9n4>
- **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)
- Kathryn Pogin, “God is Not Male”

WEEK 14 (APR 12, 14, 16): 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 (APR 19, 21, 23): PHILOSOPHY OF DISABILITY

Readings:

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

WEEK 16 (APR 26, 28, 30): PHILOSOPHY OF SEX & GENDER

Readings:

- John Corvino, “Homosexuality, Harm, and Moral Principles”
- Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze” (sections 1, 2, and 4)
- **There is no class Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup> (Dead Day)**

WEEK 17 (MAY 3, 5, 7): FINALS WEEK!

- **Term Paper due Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 5pm on Blackboard**
- **Final Exam held on Blackboard on DATE AND TIME TBD**

## **POLICIES:**

- Academic Integrity: As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic

responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is only possible when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail. Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University's 'Academic Integrity Policy' which may be found at [provost.uark.edu](http://provost.uark.edu) Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.

- Selling Notes: There are companies that will try to lure you into selling the notes you take in this class. Don't let these companies take advantage of you. Selling my notes to any commercial service I will consider a violation of my intellectual property rights and/or copyright law as well as a violation of the U of A's academic integrity policy. Continued enrollment in this class signifies intent to abide by the policy. Any violation will be reported to the Office of Academic Initiatives and Integrity.
- 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.
- Attendance: Education at the university level requires active involvement in the learning process. Therefore students have the responsibility to attend classes and to actively engage in all learning assignments or opportunities provided in their classes. Instructors have the responsibility to provide a written policy on student attendance that is tied to course objectives and included in a course syllabus. There may be times, however, when illness, family crisis, or university-sponsored activities make full attendance or participation impossible. In these situations students are responsible for making timely arrangements with the instructor to make up work missed. Such arrangements should be made in writing and prior to the absence when possible. Examples of absences that should be considered excusable include those resulting from the following: (1) illness of the student, (2) serious illness or death of a member of the student's immediate family or other family crisis, (3) University-sponsored activities for which the student's attendance is required by virtue of scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, (4) religious observances (see Students' Religious Observances policy below), (5) jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, and (6) military duty. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused.
- Weather: When the University of Arkansas declares that the inclement weather policy is in effect, we won't meet for seminar. In such cases, and in any other case when class is cancelled, you will be notified via email or Blackboard. In cases of questionable whether, please check the university website.
- Disability Related Accommodation: University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to

make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (contact 479-575-3104 or visit [cea.uark.edu](http://cea.uark.edu) for more information on registration procedures).

- Reminder About Concealed Carry on Campus: Handguns are only allowed on campus (including all classrooms) to the extent specifically authorized by state law. Each individual who lawfully possesses a handgun and an enhanced carry permit is required to keep the handgun concealed from public view at all times and is responsible for carrying the handgun in a safe manner. If an individual carries a concealed handgun in a personal carrier such as a backpack, purse, or handbag, the carrier must remain within the individual's immediate vicinity (within arm's reach). During this course, you may be required to engage in activities that may require you to separate from your belongings such as taking a quiz or examination, and thus you should plan accordingly. Any student who violates the concealed carry laws while on campus may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or discipline by the University, up to and including dismissal. If you observe someone displaying a handgun or other weapon on campus, it should be reported to the University of Arkansas Police Department. For more information, please go to [safety.uark.edu](http://safety.uark.edu).
- Problems with the Course: If you have concerns or suggestions regarding this course, I encourage you to speak to me directly about them. If you would prefer to speak with someone else, however, you may contact:  
Dr. Edward Minar  
Chair, Department of Philosophy  
Old Main 318E  
479-575-8712  
[eminar@uark.edu](mailto:eminar@uark.edu)