



---

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHI 101 – Wesleyan College

Syllabus

Summer 2024, May 13 - June 14

## Professor Contact Information

**Professor:** TBA

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Contact Information:** TBA

**Text/ISBN:** All readings can be found online, links and/or copies of the assigned text will be provided.

---

## Policies and Procedures

### Course Goals

To introduce students to methodologies for the critical study of philosophy, and to study a variety of approaches to answering metaphysical, existential, and ethical questions pertinent in history and today.

### Credit Hours

3

### Student Learning Outcomes

To Be Expanded on in Collaboration with the Class

1. For students to gain introductory knowledge and be able to identify the key concepts of primary thinkers in philosophy.
2. For students to challenge and develop working definitions of philosophy as well as an appreciation of the cross-cultural dimension of philosophical thinking and the role this thinking plays in self-development.
3. For students to articulate their own philosophical ethos, and to communicate such ethos effectively in written and verbal form.
4. For students to apply philosophical ideas to their everyday lives in order to help make more meaning out of their experiences.
5. For students to apply philosophical ideas to the socio-political world in which they live so as to understand it more deeply and to challenge it more effectively.

### Participation and Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance in the following categories:



---

| <b>Evaluation</b>   | <b>Points</b>                  |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 4 weekly written reflections (15 points each) – due at end of each week | 4 x 15 points each (60 points) |
| 5 Weekly discussions  | 4 points each x 5 (20 points)  |
| 1 Final Exam  | 20 points x 1 (20 points)      |
| <b>Total = 100 % /100points</b>   |                                |

This course is worth 100 points and the passing score is 60%. It is important to complete all course readings, to review all power points, and to participate in class discussions. Your unit assessments, written assignments, and final exam will cover all unit materials.

### **Grading Scale:**

The grading scale in the class will be as follows:

- A=90-100%
- B=80-89%
- C=70-79%
- D=60-69%
- F=59% And Below

You may track your running point total throughout the term via our course site. Please be aware, however, that the course grade you see in the site will reflect only assignments and activities you have already completed and that your professor has graded.

### **Details of Weekly Reflections**

Each week students will complete a 1.5-3 page reflection that demonstrates their understanding of the key philosophical concepts covered from week to week. This includes epistemological investigations, exploring and applying core ethical theories, and utilizing critical thinking in relation to other major philosophical topics such as free will and personal identity.

### **Academic Integrity**

Wesleyan's College expects student to show integrity in all of their work. Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, inventing or falsifying information, turning in work for more than one class without authorization, or helping someone else are all violations of the Honor Code and are not tolerated. Any of these forms of cheating will not be tolerated and will be grounds for a grade of zero on the exam or assignment and a grade of F for the course, in addition to any penalties imposed by the Provost.

### **Potential Changes to Course Schedule**

The following week-to-week schedule is a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be announced in advance via announcement and/or e-mail. Students should check their course site announcements and emails at least once every twenty-four hours throughout the term to watch for updates regarding this course.



## Course Schedule

### **Week 1: Introduction to Philosophical concepts and thinking / Theories of Epistemology and Metaphysics**

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on theories of Epistemology and Metaphysics. This includes examining ideas related to acquiring knowledge, what counts as knowledge, and questioning notions of reality.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Bertrand Russel** "The Value of Philosophy" (Selected Excerpt)
- **Plato** "The Republic" (Selected Excerpts)
- **Rene' Descartes** "Meditations I and II" (1641)
- **John Locke** "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (Selected Excerpts) (1689)
- **George Berkeley** "Principles of Human Knowledge" (Selected Excerpts)

**Discussion 1 should be held no later than Sunday**

**Weekly reflection 1 due Sunday 11:59am**

### **Week 2: Theories of Personhood, personal identity, and consciousness**

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on theories of personhood and personal identity. This includes important questions such as determining the criteria for personhood, understanding the importance of personhood as it pertains to legality, and examining the role of consciousness in our notions of 'self' or existence.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **David Hume** "A Treatise of Human Nature" Book I, Part IV, Section VI (1739 -1740)
- **John Locke** "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (Selected Excerpts)
- **Marya Schechtman** "Personal Identity and the Past" (Selected Excerpts)
- **Descartes** "Meditations" (Selected Excerpts)
- **Daniel Dennett** "Where Am I?"
- **Ifeanyi Menkiti** "African Personhood"

**Discussion 2 should be held no later than Sunday**

**Weekly reflection 2 due Sunday 11:59am**

### **Week 3: Theories of Ethics and God**

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on various theories of ethics from the Western Canon that are considered essential works. We will also discuss ideas related to God as it pertains to questions of ethics and notions of good and evil in our world.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Immanuel Kant** "Critique of Pure Reason" (Selected Excerpts or an overview) (1781)



- **Jeremy Bentham** “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation”
- **John Stuart Mill** “Utilitarianism”
- **Aristotle** “Nicomachean Ethics”
- **Nietzsche** “Genealogy of Morals”
- **John Leslie (J.L) Mackie** “Problem of Evil”
- **Blaise Pascal** “The Wager”
- **James and Stuart Rachels** “Critique of Cultural Relativism”

**Discussion 3 should be held no later than Sunday**

**Weekly reflection 3 due Sunday 11:59am**

#### **Week 4: Theories of Free Will and Socio-political philosophy**

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on free will and socio- political philosophy. This includes topics of freedom beyond the philosophical notion of free will, government structures, notions of economic and distributive justice, and we will explore questions of civil disobedience and human rights.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Baron d’holbach** “Systems of Nature”
- **Walter Terence Stace** “The Problem of Free Will”
- **Thomas Hobbes** “Leviathan” (Selected Excerpts) (1651)
- **John Locke** “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (Selected Excerpts)
- **John Rawls** “A theory of Justice” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Garrett Hardin** “Lifeboat Ethics”
- **Richard Rorty** “Justice as Loyalty”
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, from "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- **Malcolm X** Speech on civil rights/human rights

**Discussion 4 should be held no later than Sunday**

**Weekly reflection 4 due Sunday 11:59am**

#### **Week 5: Applied Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Thought Experiments**

**Note:** Content for this week will be open early, so that students have a jump start for final exam

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on various issues of applied philosophy, which is loosely defined as philosophy as it relates directly to issues and questions in our daily lives. This week will also cover various questions and thought experiments to push critical thought related to applied philosophical theories but also to ideas we have covered earlier in this semester.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Judith Jarvis** on Abortion and **David Benetar** on Anti-natalism (Personhood, ethics, existence, rights)
- **Thought experiment** on theft of unclaimed items (ethics, ownership, socio-political)
- **Wertheimer** on Societies without police
- **Beccaria** on Criminal Justice and Capital Punishment
- **Michael Sandel** on Human Enhancements

**Discussion 5 to be held no later than Wednesday (week 5) at 11:59am - This final discussion will also be an opportunity to review for final or ask any questions.**



---

**Final Exam should be completed no later than Thursday at 11:59am**

### **Civility in the Academic Community**

Students, faculty, and staff are expected to treat one another with respect in all interactions both during class meetings and on the Moodle course site. Rude, disruptive and/or disrespectful behaviors as determined by a faculty member interfere with other students' rights and with the professor's ability to teach. Therefore, any student exhibiting unacceptable behaviors during a class meeting or Moodle collaborative activity will be asked to leave and will be counted absent for that class period or activity. Failure to cooperate with this process will result in disciplinary action that may include withdrawal from the class or dismissal from the College. Violations will be reported to the Provost.

### **Disabilities Statement**

Wesleyan College is committed to equal education, full participation and access to facilities for all students. Any student who requires reasonable academic accommodations, use of auxiliary aids or facility access for a class must first register with Disability Resources by contacting Jill Amos, Director of Disability and Advocacy Services, [jamos@wesleyancollege.edu](mailto:jamos@wesleyancollege.edu) or (478) 757-5219. If reasonable accommodations are established, students should request Accommodation Letters from Disability Resources then schedule an appointment to meet with the professor to determine how the accommodations will be implemented for each class as early in the semester as possible. Accommodations require advance notice to implement and will not be retroactively administered for the semester. Accommodations that decrease the integrity of a course will not be approved.

### **Privacy in Teaching & Learning Spaces**

In order to promote an environment in which ideas may be freely expressed, the interior offices; in-person and virtual classrooms; and Moodle course sites at Wesleyan are private spaces. The unauthorized creation of photographic images, audio recordings, or video recordings of students or faculty in these spaces is considered to be disruptive behavior which may result in a student's removal from class according to the professor's discretion. The distribution of unauthorized images or recordings, or of class meeting recordings shared by a professor for instructional purposes, without the express written permission of the College is strictly prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action by the Provost of the College.