

**Framingham State University**  
**Syllabus**  
**PHIL 101 Invitation to Philosophy**  
**Summer 2019**

**General Information**

Session: Summer 2019(July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019- August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

Credit: 4

Teaching Hours: 50 Hours

Time: 2 hours/day, Mon.-Fri.

Instructor: Ryan Brown

Home Institution: Framingham State University

E-mail: TBA

Office Hours: TT 14:00-15:00

**COURSEDESCRIPTION**

This course attempts to introduce students to the core questions, problems, and methods of philosophy by paying attention to some of the main authors and texts of the discipline. We will seek to question and critically examine the notion of the human person by analyzing arguments and philosophical positions throughout the intellectual tradition.

Every effort will be made to conduct class meetings along the lines of Socrates' way of posing questions and critically assessing purported answers to the fundamental questions that Western philosophers have dealt with: questions about the ultimate nature of reality (ontology), the grounds for human beings' capacity for knowledge (epistemology) and, particularly important in our own times, questions about the meaning of human existence and the nature of "the good life" (ethics).

**LEARNINGOBJECTIVES**

- To recognize, understand, and reflect on the main philosophical visions on the human person.
- To carefully read primary and secondary philosophical texts, understanding the reasoning and arguments provided by the authors and give account thereof.
- To engage in discussions and develop critical skills for arguing a philosophical position and assess others', both in oral and written contexts.
- To integrate and connect philosophy and critical reasoning with other disciplines.
- To nurture the students' willingness to take responsibility for the expansion of their own personal, intellectual, and cultural horizon, and the choices they make within this horizon

## REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

### *Lecture and Seminar*

This is a combined lecture/seminar course. The first seventy-five minutes will be dedicated to an examination of the main concepts, ideas, and arguments of the readings. The remaining forty-five minutes will be dedicated to learn skills about how to philosophize, especially about issues of contemporary relevance, in a collaborative manner. The seminar will primarily cover problems in ethics, political philosophy, and the meaning of life. Students are encouraged to engage critically with the readings they reviewed for homework. More specifically, they will draw connections between theories and authors, identifying flaws and implications. In preparation for class, there are two specific requirements:

#### *Requirement 1: Attendance, participation, and quizzes*

Your informed attendance and intellectual engagement are essential parts of this course. During the lecture part of the class, the instructor will call on you for reference. Additionally, there will be unannounced short quizzes in class, principally covering logical reasoning.

Besides the grades for the quizzes, you will receive a weekly grade for attendance and general participation in class. The worst grade of this section will be dropped at the end of the course. This requirement will be graded along the lines suggested by the following rubric:

Grade	Description
A (100%)	Actively and regularly contributes in a significant way without monopolizing; contributions are always relevant to discussion and reflect in-depth analysis of material; keeps analysis focused; listens to others; makes a good effort to answer in class; demonstrates excellent classroom citizenship
B (85%)	Consistently contributes without monopolizing; contributions are relevant to discussion; clearly read and thought about material in advance; offers interpretation or analysis; listens to others
C (75%)	Sporadically contributes; demonstrates adequate preparation by offering straightforward information
D (65%)	Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion; contributions are sometimes off topic; tries to respond but does not offer very much
F (0%)	Often absent; no or almost no contributions

#### *Requirement 2: Biweekly feedback on readings*

It is important that you complete all required readings and post your feedback on Blackboard twice a week. This feedback should be no more than 200 words and may include either questions or critical comments that you have about the readings. You will be divided in two groups: one writing on Mondays and Wednesdays; and another writing on Tuesdays and Thursdays. All responses will be due the day of class at noon. The worst grade of this section will be dropped at the end of the course. Each response will

be graded along the lines suggested by the following rubric:

Grade	Description
A (100%)	Feedback is relevant to discussion and reflects in-depth analysis of material; clearly read and thought about material carefully; keeps analysis focused and critical; offers interpretation or analysis; asks original questions and identifies implications; integrates material from previous classes and/or other students' posts; does not exceed 200 words
B (85%)	Feedback is relevant to discussion; clearly read and thought about material in advance; offers interpretation or analysis
C (75%)	Feedback demonstrates adequate preparation by offering straightforward and descriptive information about material; identifies primary and secondary ideas
D (65%)	Feedback describes descriptive information about material; often paraphrases; less than 100 words
F (0%)	No submission or inadequate (off topic)

***Essay papers***

Along with attendance at lectures and active participation in discussions, you will need to write two short midterm essay prompts (a double-space format of 1,200 words; due on June 8 and June 22). No later papers will be accepted. Specific guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

***Written exams***

There will be one midterm exam on June 15 and a cumulative final exam on June 29.

**FINAL GRADES**

Final grades will be calculated in the following manner:

- Attendance, participation, and quizzes: 15%
- Biweekly feedback on readings: 15%
- Two essay prompts (15% each): 30%
- Written exams (15% for the midterm and 25% for the

final): 40% The grading scale is as follows:

Grade	Description and thresholds
A	Excellent work A = 94-100%; A- = 90-93%
B	Good work B+ = 87-89%; B = 84-86%; B- = 80-83%
C	Adequate work C+ = 77-79%; C = 74-76%; C- = 70-73%
D	Poor work D+ = 67-69%; D = 64-66%; D- = 60-63%
F	Inadequate or insufficient work F = 59% and below

**COURSETEXT**

John Cottingham, ed., *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. [ISBN: 978-1405124782]

**COURSEPOLICIES*****Attendance Policy***

My expectation is that all students will attend class and participate. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend please let me know prior to class by email. Absences are only permitted with a documented excuse, which will be assessed by the instructor's criterion. Due to the intensive character of this course, more than one unexcused absence will result in a grade reduction. For each unexcused absence beyond the first, the student's participation grade will be reduced by 5%.

***Technology Policy***

The use of laptops and smart phones will not be allowed in class. These devices inhibit communication with other people in the room, as well as distracting you, your classmates, and the professor. If this policy poses a serious hardship to you in some way (i.e., a documented learning disability), please come speak to the professor and arrangements will be made. E-readers will be permitted for use in class provided the e-book is NOT on a phone or laptop, but on a tablet. All internet/wireless functions must be disabled during class (i.e. airplane mode). Please take notes in a paper notebook.

***Academic Honesty***

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind are unacceptable, and all such offences will be reported to your academic dean and will result in failure of the assignment and possibly of the course. Please properly cite all quoted or paraphrased sources, and any ideas which are not originally yours. If you have any questions about how to cite your sources, or if you are unsure what counts as plagiarism or cheating, please get in touch with me. For more information about FSU's policy on academic integrity, see: [https://framingham.edu/Assets/uploads/academics/catalogs/\\_documents/\\_documents/undergraduate-catalogs/2017-2018-undergraduate-catalog/undergraduate-catalog-2017-2018.pdf](https://framingham.edu/Assets/uploads/academics/catalogs/_documents/_documents/undergraduate-catalogs/2017-2018-undergraduate-catalog/undergraduate-catalog-2017-2018.pdf).

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

\*Note: WP refers to the textbook *Western Philosophy*. BB refers to Blackboard.

**PART I. INTRODUCTION AND METAPHYSICS****Week 1**7/8. Introduction to the Class and Subject

7/8a. Introduction and Syllabus: What Is Philosophy? Philosophical Disciplines

7/8b. How to Read Philosophy? The Origins: The Transition from Myth to Logos [WP I.1]

7/9. Plato's Path to Know Reality

7/9a. Allegory of the Cave [WP I.2, II.1]

7/9b. Historical Overview of Western Philosophy

7/10. Plato's Ultimate Reality

7/10a. The Form of Beauty [WP XI.1; BB Plato's *Symposium*]

7/10b. How to Think Properly? Logical Reasoning: Classifications, Definitions, and Arguments

7/11. Plato's Idea of Goodness

7/11a. Morality and Happiness [WP VIII.1; BB Plato's *Apology*]

7/11b. How to Write a Philosophy Paper? Evaluating Socrates' Arguments

7/12. Plato's Idea of Justice

7/12a. Justice and the Polis [WP X.1; BB Plato's *Republic*]

7/12b. How to Argue Philosophy? Who Should Be the Politician?

## **PART II. THE PERSON AND THE IDEA OF GOD**

### **Week 2**

7/15. The Immortality of the Soul

7/15a. Plato and Aristotle [WP IV.1, IV.2]

7/15b. Is Love a Finding or an Activity of the Soul?

7/16. The Human Being as a Substance

7/16a. Substance and the Four Causes [WP II.2, VII.1]

7/16b. What Is Friendship?

7/17. Proofs of the Existence of God

7/17a. The Ontological Argument and the Five Ways [WP VI.1, VI.2]

7/17b. Why Is There Evil Then?

7/18. From Human Being to the Person

7/18a. Free Will and Providence, Immanence and Transcendence [WP V.7, VI.8]

7/18b. How to Reconcile Faith and Reason?

7/19. God, Morality, and Law [PAPER 1 DUE]

7/19a. Natural Law and the Objectivity of Ethics [WP VIII.12; BB Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*]

7/19b. Can We Ignore the Law Written on the Heart?

## **PART III. ETHICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

### **Week 3**

7/22. Virtue Ethics

7/22a. Ethical Virtue and Tradition [WP VIII.2, VIII.11]

7/22b. Can War and Violence Ever Be Just?

7/23. Deontological Ethics

7/23a. Ethics of Duty and Reason [WP VIII.5, VIII.9]

7/23b. Are Human Rights Moral Absolutes?

7/24. Consequentialist Ethics

7/24a. The Principle of Utility [WP VIII.6, VIII.7]

7/24b. Can We Reasonably Make Exceptions?

7/25. Politics of Power

7/25a. The State of Nature Theories [WP X.3, X.4, X.6]

7/25b. Should the Majority Always Win?

7/26. Political Ideologies

7/26a. MIDTERM EXAM

7/26b. What Are Liberalism, Conservatism, and Socialism?

**PART IV.  
EPISTEMOLOGY**

**Week 4**

7/29. Scientific Revolution and Modern Idealism

7/29a. The Power of Reason [WP VII.2, VII.3] 7/29b.

What Are the Limits of Scientific Knowledge?

7/30. Rationalist Epistemology

7/30a. Descartes' *Meditations* [WP I.4, IV.4, VI.3]

7/30b. What Can we Know about Animals?

7/31. Empiricist Epistemology

7/31a. The Power of Experience [WP I.5, II.7, II.6]

7/31b. Is There Moral Responsibility without Causality?

8/1. Transcendental Idealism

8/1a. Reconciling Rationalism and Empiricism [WP I.8, II.8, VII.7]

8/1b. Why Is There Anything at All?

8/2. Contemporary Metaphysics [PAPER 2 DUE] 8/2a.

The Question of Being Revisited [WP II.9, II.10]

8/2b. Can A Machine Have a Mind and  
Consciousness?

**PART V. THE MEANING OF LIFE**

**Week 5**

8/5. Death

8/5a. Avoidance and Acceptance [WP XII.1, XII.2]

8/5b. How to Live a Good Life?

8/6. Faith

8/6a. Revelation and Choice [WP XII.3, XII.5]

8/6b. What Do we Owe the Other?

8/7. Absurdity

8/7a. Nihilism and Lack of Meaning [WP XII.7, XII.9]

8/7b. Can Suicide Be Justified?

8/8. Freedom

8/8a. Freedom in Tradition [WP V.6, V.10]

8/8b. Who Am I?

8/9. FINAL EXAM