

# Bridgewater State University

## Phil 151: Introduction To Philosophy – Online

May 26 – June 29, 2020

Prof. Gal Kober (gkober@bridgew.edu)

Office Hours: By appointment; through Bb Collaborate or Zoom.

Course credits: 3

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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This course is an introduction to philosophy through seminal questions concerning knowledge: What can we know? How can we know it? Do we ever know the world as it is? We will investigate questions regarding the acquisition of knowledge, the ability to articulate our knowledge, the relation between theoretical and practical knowledge, and especially the relation between external reality and what we can know of it. We will explore these issues through the writings of major figures in the history of Western philosophy (Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein) along with a few contemporary philosophers.

### **WARNING! This is hard work!**

This online course requires **the same amount of work as a face-to-face, full-semester course**.

Students taking a condensed-timeline course like this one should be aware that it is challenging, and requires hard work and self-discipline. Those choosing to take this course cannot expect any shortcuts, or for it to be a do-nothing class. Be aware of the demands posed by the shorter timeline, and be prepared to dedicate the time to reading the material, actively participate in online discussions, and submit all work on time.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

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**All texts posted** on our **Blackboard** site.

Texts are listed below, within our schedule, with their reading due dates.

### GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

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Grading is on a 100-point scale.

Exam 1: 20%      Exam 2: 20%      Exam 3: 20%      Reading Questions: 20%      Participation: 20%

We will have **3 exams**. You will take them at designated times. The exams will include a few essay questions (see exam grading rubric, on Bb) and will be open notes. Be aware that open notes exams are harder, as they require **understanding**, not simply quoting from notes or from texts. Your answers will have to be **your original work**, and directly relevant to the questions: they cannot be prepared in

advance, and cannot be cut-and-pasted. Exam dates are listed within the schedule, below. There will be **no make-up or late exams**. A missed exam gets a grade of zero.

**10 reading questions** are due during the semester (out of 15 that will be posted). Reading questions are posted along with the readings (marked on the schedule as RQ), and should be submitted no later than **noon (12pm) China time**, Midnight Boston time, on their designated days. **No late submissions** will be accepted. Reading questions will become unavailable as soon as the day's lecture is posted.

Your **participation** grade is calculated based on consistent participation, timely submissions, and the quality of your discussion contributions.

All work for this course should be your own independent work. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated**; this includes any work not written by you and presented as such, or any cheating whatsoever. If you are unsure about how to avoid plagiarism, please ask me.

**Plagiarism will lead to a failing grade for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly for the entire course.**

There will be **no extra credit**. To get a good grade, you must complete the regular assigned work.

## **COURSE FORMAT**

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**Content:** Each topic covered in the course (and each exam) appears as a separate content area on Blackboard. Each topic will include audio/power point lectures, and readings. The material remains available throughout the entire course, you can always go back and listen or read again.

**Lectures:** Several lectures (most are Power Points with audio; some are just audio or just power point slides) will be offered for each topic. A pdf version of each lecture will also be posted. The lectures help to simulate the classroom setting, and introduce you to the material in the course. Lectures are posted in the topic folders on Blackboard. Folders are clearly labeled, and posted in order. Lectures are posted **daily**, at **12pm China time**, midnight Boston time.

Students who have taken similar online classes in the past recommend that you treat the lectures as though they were classroom lectures; take your own notes while listening to the audio/power point presentation. Creating your own notes will help you understand the readings, post higher-quality discussion points, and perform well on the exams.

To further help simulate the classroom setting, lectures are posted 5 times a week—Monday through Friday, at the same time daily (12pm China time). This way, you can follow a scheduled routine for your reading, reading questions submissions, and lectures. The only exception to this schedule are exam days.

**Reading:** In the topic folders, you will find the relevant readings, posted in order, and corresponding to the lectures. The reading assignments are listed on the schedule below; each is listed on the date it should be read by.

Reading the assigned material is essential in order to understand the lectures, follow and contribute to discussion, and perform well on the exams. Read carefully, take notes, and post any questions you may have about the readings in the appropriate discussion forum.

Reading a philosophical text is complicated. When you plan your time, allow time to read each text more than once.

**Reading Questions:** Most reading assignments are accompanied by a reading question. The Reading questions are helpful in focusing your thinking while reading. They are also part of your graded work: You need to complete and submit **at least 10** (answers to) reading questions during the course. The detailed RQ assignment is posted in the Assignments part of our Blackboard website. Submission links for each reading question are also found in the Assignment area. Each of them has a strict due date. You can submit each reading questions only until **noon China time** on the day when a reading is listed on the schedule. Each RQ becomes unavailable as soon as the day's lecture is posted.

**Exams:** Exams have strict due dates and a limited time-span within which to be taken (these dates are also listed in the course schedule, below). Pay close attention to those dates – each exam is open for a period of 24 hours, after which it becomes permanently unavailable.

- Each exam can only be taken once, and only in a single two-hour sitting. You cannot take an exam multiple times, and cannot start-and-stop. Make sure that you are available for an uninterrupted stretch of two hours to take each exam when it is posted.
- Exam dates and times are fixed; you must be available to take them during these periods in order to take this course. After the due date, the exam will no longer be accessible to you – no late attempts are possible.
- Make sure to take exams on a computer that works, using a reliable power source and a stable internet connection. It is your responsibility to make sure the exam was completed and that your

grade was recorded. If there is a technical problem, you must report it to me immediately, so I can try and fix it from my end (this happens, but only **very** rarely).

- If the deadline passes and you have no recorded grade for the exam, you will get a zero for that work.

**Discussion:** The discussion boards are organized by topics (as listed below on the schedule) and can be located under the Discussion Forums link. You are **required to contribute** to these discussions. Discussion questions are presented at the end of each lecture; you are also welcome to add your own questions to these discussions. You can continue to contribute to each topic until the midnight before the next topic opens. At that point, commenting will be closed. You can always go back to read previous discussions, however. You will be graded on your participation in the discussion forums. Posts that add to your participation grade must be relevant, substantial contribution to the discussion. Further instructions are posted on Bb.

## SCHEDULE

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**Readings** should be done **by the date for which they are listed**.

All the readings are posted on our Blackboard course website.

**Reading questions** are due by **noon China time on the day they are listed** for.

Lectures and materials are listed below in the order they should be read.

T	May 26	Lecture 1: Introduction	About philosophy and this course; main themes <b>Reading:</b> Pryor, <i>How to Read Philosophy</i>
<b><u>Topic 1: Knowing What? and What is Knowledge?</u></b>			
W	May 27	Lecture 2: Definitions	Plato's <i>Meno</i> : read to end of p.13 (Defining virtue) <b>RQ1</b>
Th	May 28	Lecture 3: Definitions and knowledge Lecture 4: Meno's paradox	Wittgenstein <i>Philos. Investigations</i> 65-75 <b>RQ2</b>
F	May 29	Lecture 5, 6: Knowledge and belief	<i>Meno</i> p.14 -- end Strawson, <i>Analysis and Metaphysics</i> pp. 5-7 <b>RQ3</b>
End of week 1			
M	June 1	Lecture 7: Knowledge and reality	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , book 5 (start @ parag. 474 line c)
T	June 2	Lecture 8: Knowledge and truth	<i>The Republic</i> , book 7: The Cave
W	June 3	Lecture 9: The problem of universals	<i>The Republic</i> , book 6: 509d--end (line + sun) <b>RQ4</b>
Th	June 4	<b>– First exam (topic 1)–</b>	

## Topic 2: Doubt, Knowing, and Reason

F	June 5	Lecture 10: Descartes – doubt	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> – Meditation 1	RQ5
End of week 2				
M	June 8	Lecture 11: The cogito	<i>Meditation 2</i>	
Tu	June 9	Lecture 12: God; Clear and distinct ideas	<i>Meditation 3</i>	RQ6
W	Jun 10	Lecture 13: Error; Mind and body	<i>Meditation 4-5</i>	RQ7
Th	Jun 11	Lecture 14: Descartes’s Conclusions	<i>Meditation 6</i>	RQ8

## Topic 3: Knowledge and Experience

F	Jun 12	Lecture 15: Hume’s Empiricism	Hume’s <i>Treatise</i> , book 1 part I, sections 1-7; Part II, section 6	RQ9
End of week 3				
M	June 15	Lecture 16: Induction and Causation	<i>Treatise</i> book 1 part III, sections 1-4, 12-14	RQ10
Tu	June 16	Lecture 17: Identity, Substance, Doubt	<i>Treatise</i> book 1 part IV, sections 1,2,7	

## Topic 4: Knowing Inside and Out

W	June 17	Lecture 18: Analytic, synthetic; A priori	Kant’s <i>Prolegomena</i> , Sections 1-21	RQ11
Th	Jun 18	Lecture 19: Understanding and Categories	<i>Prolegomena</i> , 27-35	RQ12
F	Jun 19	Lecture 20: Kant’s system; Kant vs. Hume	<i>Prolegomena</i> : Kant handout; review	
End of week 4				
M	Jun 22	<b>– Second Exam (topics 2, 3, 4) –</b>		

## Topic 5: Knowledge, Certainty, Ignorance

T	Jun 23	Lecture 21: Skepticism and Common Sense	Moore: <i>A Defence of Common Sense</i> Moore: <i>A Proof of the External World</i>	RQ13
W	Jun 24	Lecture 22: Knowledge and Certainty	Wittgenstein: <i>On Certainty</i>	RQ14
Th	Jun 25	Lecture 23: Knowledge and Ignorance	Crawford, <i>Shop Class</i> Shotwell, Common Sense	RQ15
F	Jun 26	Lecture 24: Ignorance and Justice	McKinnon, Epistemic Injustice Rini, Fake News and Partisan Epistemology	RQ16
End of week 5				
M	Jun 29	<b>– Third exam (topic 5) –</b>		

## **GRADE SCALE**

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90-100: A (90-92: A-, 93-100: A)

80-89: B (80-82: B-, 83-86: B, 87-89: B+)

70-79: C (70-72: C-, 73-76: C, 77-79: C+)

60-69: D (60-62: D-, 63-66: D, 67-69: D+)

00-59: F

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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Students completing this course will have learned:

1. How to think abstractly and concretely not only about matters that preoccupy philosophers but also about fundamental issues in other disciplines and practices.
2. How to produce a cogent argument and how to express it with maximum perspicuity, both in writing and orally.
3. How to anticipate and even welcome objections to one's views, how to apply the principle of charity to others' opinions, and how to address objections and competing views effectively and respectfully in one's writing.
4. How to read, analyze, and articulate arguments and viewpoints in primary philosophical texts, both historical and contemporary.
5. How to develop and defend one's own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.