



Bridgewater State University

## Phil 151: Introduction To Philosophy - Online

June 1 – June 28, 2021

Prof. Gal Kober (gkober@bridgew.edu)

Live Zoom Sessions: T, Thu 9pm Boston time (EDT)

Office Hours: By appointment; through Zoom.

Credits: 3

### [What Is This Course?](#)

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This course is an introduction to philosophy through one of its most fundamental questions: What is knowledge, and do we have any? Some other questions come with it: What can we know? How can we know it? Do we ever know the world as it is? We will explore these questions through lectures, discussion, and the writings of some prominent figures in the history of Western philosophy.

#### Workload Warning

This online course requires **the same amount of work as a face-to-face, full-semester course**. The Federal accreditation standard in the US defines a 3 credit class as at least 120 hours of work. In a face-to-face class this is typically 40 hours of in-class time and at least 80 hours of out-of-class work. **We are covering a full semester in 4 weeks**; you are expected to spend the full 120 hours. Calculate how much time per day this requires, and **plan accordingly**. By choosing to take a course like this one, you are committing to the hard work and self-discipline that it entails. Expect no shortcuts. Be prepared to dedicate the necessary time to reading the material, actively participating in online discussions, and completing all work on time.

### [Intro Quiz](#)

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The course **begins with an Intro Quiz**. It is based on (1) the intro lecture (on Bb) and (2) this syllabus. **You have to score over 90% on the Intro Quiz in order to unlock the rest of the course**. Read this syllabus carefully, and use it during the quiz. You may take the quiz as many times as you need to in order to reach the required grade.

### [Required Texts](#)

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**All texts are posted on our Blackboard site**. Readings are listed below on our schedule, with due dates.

## Grading and Requirements

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Grading is on a 100-point scale.

**Exams:** 60 points (3 x 20pts)

**Reading Questions:** 20 points (5 x 4pts)

**Participation:** 20 points

We will have **3 exams**. You will take them at designated times. The exams will include multiple choice and short essay questions, and will be open notes. Open notes exams 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 cut-and-pasted from anywhere. 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.

**5 reading questions** are due during the semester (out of 15 that will be posted). Reading questions (marked on the schedule as RQ) are posted along with the readings and lectures. RQs should be answered in the group discussion board. See further details below.

Your **participation** grade is calculated based on consistent participation on discussion boards, timely submissions, and the quality of your **10 discussion contributions (CPs)**; see “discussion boards”, below).

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

## Course Format

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**Staying Organized:** To help keep track of what is due and when, an “**Important Dates**” document has been posted, as well as a **checklist of all course work**. Keep track of due dates and follow the order of readings and assignments as outlined in the full schedule at the end of this syllabus. Enter quiz and exam dates into your calendar. Post with discussion contributions and reading questions regularly, and don’t miss the topic deadlines. Attend the live sessions and ask questions. Read the policies on the syllabus.

**Content:** Each topic covered in the course 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:** Lectures will be offered for each topic. 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 midnight Boston time. Students who have taken similar online classes in the past recommend that you treat the recorded lectures as though they were live classroom lectures; take your own notes while listening to the audio/power point presentation/video. Creating your own notes will help you understand the readings, make higher-quality discussion contributions, and perform well on the exams.

**Live Zoom Sessions:** twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday at 9pm Boston time, we will have one

hour long live discussion sessions by Zoom. These sessions are optional; they will be recorded and you may watch them later if you miss them.

However, participating allows you to ask questions and clarify any misunderstanding.

**Exams:** Exams have strict due dates and a limited time-span within which to be taken (these dates are listed in the course schedule, below). Pay close attention to those dates – each exam is open for a period of **36** 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 it.

**All work for this course will be your own independent work.**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated; this includes **any work** not written by you but presented as such; answers copied from elsewhere; or any cheating whatsoever. If you are unsure about how to avoid plagiarism, please ask me.

**Plagiarism may lead to a grade of 0 for the plagiarized work; an F for the entire course; and reporting to your home institution.**

**Reading:** In the topic folders, you will find the relevant readings, posted in order, 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:** Nearly every reading assignment is accompanied by a reading question (**RQ**). The Reading questions help direct your thinking and attention while reading. They also form part of your course grade: **You need to post at least 5 answers** to reading questions during the course. They are graded; you are thus encouraged to submit more than 5 so you may get full credit (you need 5 full-point answers to earn full credit). RQ are completed by **posting your answer in the group discussion board**. Your answers to the RQs should be your own, and should reflect your reading;

**they don't need to be all correct, but they need to show you have made an effort to understand** the text. Not just any post will get full credit. RQs in each topic can be answered until **midnight** on the day the next topic opens. At that point, commenting in the previous topic board will close.

**Discussion Boards:** You will be assigned into a discussion group, with which you will share a discussion board for the duration of the course. You are welcome to use your discussion group as an online study group, as well, where you discuss and try to understand the material together. The discussion boards **are organized by topics**, following the topics on the schedule.

**Your discussion contributions** will be of two kinds: **RQs (at least 5)** and content posts, **CPs (at least 10)**. Both count towards your participation points.

In order to complete your **CP requirement**, you have many options. Discussion questions are presented at the end of each lecture; you are also welcome to post with your own question; you may comment on any of your group-mates posts (either RQs or CPs); add to what they were saying; follow up; debate; etc. You may continue to contribute to each topic until **midnig** on the day the next topic opens. At that point, commenting in that topic board will be closed. You can always go back to **read** previous discussions, however.

★ Posting on the discussion board is how you earn points towards your participation grade. You are **required to contribute** to these discussions. You need a total of **10 contributions of high quality for a full CP grade**. You are thus encouraged to post *more* than 10 times, to make sure you get the full points. **Posts that add to your participation grade must be independently written by you, and form a relevant, substantial contribution to the discussion.** ★

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

Tu	June 1	Lecture 1: Introduction	About philosophy and this course ★ Take <b>Intro Quiz</b> to unlock the rest of the course ★
<b>Topic 1: What is Knowledge?</b>			
W	June 2	Lecture 2: Definitions	Plato's <i>Meno</i> : read to end of p.13 (Defining virtue) <b>RQ1</b>
Th	June 3	Lecture 3: Definitions and knowledge Lecture 4: Meno's paradox	Wittgenstein <i>Philos. Investigations</i> 65-75 <b>RQ2</b>
F	June 4	Lecture 5, 6: Knowledge and belief	<i>Meno</i> p.14 -- end <b>RQ3</b> Strawson, <i>Analysis and Metaphysics</i> pp. 5-7
End of Week 1			
M	June 7	Lecture 7: Knowledge and reality	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , book 5 (start @ parag. 474 line c) <b>RQ4</b>
T	June 8	Lecture 8: Knowledge and truth	<i>The Republic</i> , book 7: The Cave <b>RQ5</b>

W	June 9	Lecture 9: The problem of universals	<i>The Republic</i> , book 6: 509d--end (line + sun)	RQ6
<b><u>Topic 2: Doubt, Knowing, and Reason</u></b>				
Th	June 10	Lecture 10: Descartes – doubt	Descartes, <i>Meditations – Meditation 1</i>	RQ7
F	June 11	Lecture 11: The cogito	<i>Meditation 2</i> – <b>First exam opens for 36 hrs (topic 1) –</b>	RQ8
End of Week 2				
M	June 14	Lecture 12: God; Clear and distinct ideas	<i>Meditation 3</i>	RQ9
<b><u>Topic 3: Knowledge and Experience</u></b>				
Tu	June 15	Lecture 13: Hume’s Empiricism	<i>Treatise</i> , book 1 part I, sections 1-7; Part II, section 6	RQ10
W	June 16	Lecture 14: Induction and Causation	<i>Treatise</i> book 1 part III, sections 1-4, 12-14	RQ11
Th	June 17	Lecture 15: Identity, Substance, Doubt	<i>Treatise</i> book 1 part IV, sections 1,2,7	
<b><u>Topic 4: Knowing Inside and Out</u></b>				
F	June 18	Lecture 18: Analytic, synthetic; A priori	Kant’s <i>Prolegomena</i> , Sections 1-21	RQ12
End of Week 3				
M	June 21	– <b>Exam 2 (topics 2, 3) –</b>		
Tu	June 22	Lecture 19: Understanding and Categories	<i>Prolegomena</i> , 27-35	RQ13
W	June 23	Lecture 20: Kant’s system; Kant vs. Hume	Kant podcast; review	
Th	Jun 24	Lecture 21: Skepticism and Common Sense	Moore: <i>A Defence of Common Sense; A Proof of the External World</i>	RQ14
F	Jun 25	Lecture 22: Knowledge and Certainty	Wittgenstein: <i>On Certainty</i>	RQ15
End of Week 4				
M	Jun 28	– <b>Exam 3 (topic 4) –</b>		

### **GRADE SCALE**

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**

Students completing this course will have learned:

1. Several of the main problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers, and the main positions taken on them.
2. How to read, analyze, and articulate philosophical arguments and viewpoints, both historical and contemporary.
3. How to think abstractly and concretely not only about matters that preoccupy philosophers but also about fundamental issues in other disciplines and practices.
4. How to develop and defend one’s own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.
5. 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.