

PHI 1500H, Fall 2024

Honors Major Issues in Philosophy

Tues/Thurs 4:10pm - 5:25pm

Instructor: Maggie Fife (she/her)

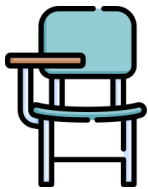
Email: margaretannfife@gmail.com (preferred)

mfife@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Location: A-Field Building (17 Lexington Ave), room 303

Office Hours: Tuesday 2pm-3pm or by appointment

Office Location: Vertical Campus, room 5-260B (within the History Department)

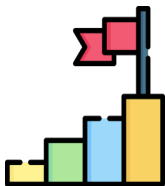


Course Description:

Philosophy is the systematic study of the “big” questions about reality and human experience. This course is designed to introduce students to a wide variety of philosophical topics and arguments. Some questions we will focus on include:

- Do we have good reason to believe in God?
- Can we have genuine knowledge of anything?
- What is the mind?
- How do we retain our personal identity over time?
- Do humans have free will?
- What do we owe one another?
- What makes death bad?

We will focus on interrogating our own assumptions about philosophical topics while learning methods for asking and answering tough questions.



Learning Goals:

This course should help students:

- Acquire an understanding of major philosophical problems and theories.
- Cultivate critical thinking and argumentation skills by evaluating philosophical arguments.
- Enhance reading comprehension skills and gain confidence in their own ability to understand difficult texts.
- Become more comfortable with college-level writing through informal and formal writing assignments.
- Approach both academic texts and differing views charitably through socratic dialogue, and reflect on the impact an individual's place in society has on their views.

**Required texts:**

- Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings
7th Edition
Editors John Perry, Michael Bratman, John Martin Fisher
ISBN: 9780190200237

**Requirements/Grading:**

Attendance and participation – **20%** total

- ↳ Attendance: 10%
- ↳ Active Participation: 10%

Discussion board – **25%** total

- ↳ Weekly posts: 20%
- ↳ Communal glossary: 5%

In-class content quizzes – **15%** total

- ↳ Quiz 1: 5%
- ↳ Quiz 2: 5%
- ↳ Quiz 3: 5%

Presentation – **15%** total

Scaffolded paper assignment – **25%** total

- ↳ Outline: 5%
- ↳ First draft and peer review: 10%
- ↳ Final draft: 10%

Note: The last day to withdraw and receive a “W” grade is November 6th.

**Our Classroom Community and Policies:**

A respectful environment is necessary for learning. As members of this classroom community, we must all do our part to build a respectful and inclusive space. I do not tolerate discrimination of any kind. We will discuss some sensitive and divisive topics, and I encourage you to approach differing views with openness and charitability.

Furthermore, I have the following expectations:

- Arrive on time.
- Attendance is required, but a reasonable number of absences will be excused if you communicate with me as soon as possible.
- Tech policy: There will be significant portions of every class where no tech (laptops, phones, tablets, etc.) will be allowed. Come prepared by bringing paper and a writing utensil.
- Complete each reading before class and bring the reading to class.

- Actively participate in class and small group discussions. Challenge yourself: If you are someone who has trouble speaking up, come with one question or comment prepared. If you are someone who speaks a lot in class, challenge yourself by stepping back and listening to others' comments. Informal writing and completion of class activities will be incorporated in your participation grade.
- Make-up quizzes and extensions:
 - ↳ Make-up quizzes will be permitted with an excused absence, but will require scheduling a time to meet with me outside of class. Quiz material may differ from the original quiz.
 - ↳ Extensions on assignments (excluding discussion board posts) will be considered if requested 48 hours in advance.
 - ↳ All group members must be present for their presentation. If a group member is unable to attend, the presentation will be rescheduled, or that member will receive a 0.
- We commit to integrity in this course by properly crediting the ideas of others. Familiarize yourself with Baruch's [Academic Honesty](#) policy and [plagiarism tutorial](#). I reserve the right to report any suspected instance of cheating or plagiarism to Baruch's disciplinary committee for action.
- Use of artificial intelligence: Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and you should be aware of its benefits and current limitations. However, there will be little use for generative AI in this class. For your final paper, you will be asked to identify if and when you used AI and cite it properly. Only reasonable use of AI will be accepted. We will discuss this more throughout the semester.



Accessibility:

I try to make my class accessible, but it's possible I've missed something. Please let me know what I can do to help you succeed. In addition to working with me, you may also find useful services at In addition to working with me, you may also seek out various campus services like the [Writing Center](#), [Disability Services](#), [Student Academic Consulting Center](#), [Baruch Technology Loan Program](#), etc.).



Need help?

If you find any aspect of this course challenging, please come talk to me. There are many reasons someone might have a hard time: some people find organizing their thoughts in writing challenging, others might find philosophical readings unusual and hard to follow—they often are! I can help with these and other challenges.



Course Schedule:

- All listed readings are required and must be brought to class
- Discussion Board posts are due at 12pm every Tuesday.

Units	Date	Topic/Reading	Assignments
	Th 8/29	• Introductions – no reading	
	Tues 9/3	• Russell, “The Value of Philosophy” p 17-20	
Unit 1: God and Evil	Th 9/5	• “Logical Toolkit” p 8-13	
	Tues 9/10	• Anselm, “The Ontological Argument” p 40-42 • Aquinas, “The Existence of God” p 42-44	
	Th 9/12	• Paley, “Natural Theology” p 45-49	
	Tues 9/17	• McCord Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God” p 115-122	
	Th 9/19	• Sutherland, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God” p 123-130	
Unit 2: Knowledge and Reality	Tues 9/24	• Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy” (pdf)	
	Th 9/26	• Grau, “Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and The Matrix” p 181-188	
	Tues 10/1	★ Quiz 1: Anselm, Aquinas, Paley • Ayer, “What is Knowledge?” (pdf)	Quiz 1 in class
	Th 10/3	No class	
Unit 3: Minds, Bodies, and Persons	Tues 10/8	• Armstrong, “The Nature of Mind” p 279-286	
	Th 10/10	• Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know” p 291-294	
	Tues 10/15	No class, Monday Schedule	
	Th 10/17	• Locke, “Identity and Diversity” (pdf)	
	Tues 10/22	• Sider, “Free Will and Determinism” (pdf)	
	Th 10/24	★ Quiz 2: Armstrong and Jackson • Writing Workshop	Quiz 2 in class

Unit 4: Ethics and Society	Tues 10/29	· Bentham, "The Principle of Utility," p 480-483	
	Th 10/31	· Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" p 518-526	
	Tues 11/05	· Velleman "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics" p 544-550	
	Th 11/07	· Velleman, "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics" p 551-555, 558-560	
	Tues 11/12	· Alcoff, "Racism and Visible Race" p 699-707	
	Th 11/14	★ Quiz 3: Bentham and Singer · No reading: paper topic introduced, time to work on outline	Quiz 3 in class
Unit 5: Existential Issues	Tues 11/19	· Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" p 811-813	
	Th 11/21	· Nagel, "The Absurd" p 813-819	
	Tues 11/26	· Nagel, "Death" p 849-853	
	Th 11/28	No Class, Thanksgiving	
	Tues 12/3	· Draft due and peer review in class	Draft 1 due Peer review
	Th 12/5	· Brueckner and Fischer, "Why is Death Bad?" p 854-860	
	Tues 12/10	· Moller, "Love and Death" p 860-868	
	Th 12/12	· Last day of class – no reading	
	Tues 12/17	Finals	Final paper due on Brightspace