



Fall 2023

#### PI 101-01 - INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Course Syllabus and Calendar

#### **Section Information**

PI 101-01 In Person T/Th 12:30 PM- 1:50 PM HSS 306

#### **Instructor Information**

Dr. Jonathan Wurtz wurtzj@triton.uog.edu

Office Hours: TBD (671) 735-2818

## **COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces the student to the nature of philosophy and to philosophical thinking, through a discussion of various important topics in philosophy. Issues can include the philosophy of mind, death and immortality, knowledge, time and time travel, free will, personality identity, the nature of morality, the existence of God and more.

#### **COURSE CONTENT**

This class introduces students to philosophical thinking through four topical inquiries: **the simulation hypothesis**, **the politics of knowledge and truth**, **the self and agency**, and **the good and social justice**.

The first topic asks about the nature of reality and our access to it. We will specifically ask questions like: How can I know what is? What is the nature of reality? Can reality be simulated? Can inquirers tell the difference between simulated and non-simulated reality? Is there any element of reality that I can be certain about? And more. The second topic will feed off our answers from the first section and turn to the nature of the self. We will read texts concerned with the metaphysical nature of selfhood, our epistemological access to it, and its relationship to agency, morality, and freedom. The third section of the course will be concern with the politics of truth and knowledge. While many take knowledge and truth to be objective representations of the world, we shall look deeper into the normative background of knowledge and ask questions like: is abstract knowledge, human knowledge? Is knowledge only the rational and universal? What is universal and abstract knowledge based on? Is abstract universal knowledge "good" knowledge? Finally, we will end with a section on the good and social justice. In it, we will cover topics from basic ethical theories to the normalization of evil and racism.

#### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ALIGNMENT MATRIX

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)	Program (PLO)	Institutional (ILO)
Justify philosophical positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way	(A) Justify positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way	Mastery of critical thinking and problem solving
Express philosophical positions orally and in writing precisely and clearly	(B) Express themselves orally and in writing precisely and clearly	Effective oral and written communication
Engage in comparative philosophical thinking across multiple traditions	(C) Understand and engage with perspectives different to their own	Understanding and appreciation of culturally diverse people, ideas, and values in a democratic context
Engage in philosophical dialogue about concrete situations and problems with breadth and depth	(D) Analyse real-world problems using philosophical tools	Mastery of quantitative analysis
Reconstruct the philosophical positions of authors through the close reading of texts	E) Reconstruct the positions of authors through the close reading of texts	Responsible use of knowledge, natural resources, and technology
Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others	F) Practice philosophical virtues in their interactions with others	An interest in personal development and lifelong learning

## **WORDS OF WISDOM**

As your professor, I am here to help you succeed and I built this syllabus as a means to maximize this effort. However, students must take the initiative to communicate with me their struggles, difficulties, and obstacles with the class. *IF I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, I CAN'T HELP YOU.* Send me an email at <a href="www.wurtzj@triton.uog.edu">wurtzj@triton.uog.edu</a> or come to my office hours.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Required readings are provided on Moodle

#### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

## GRADING INFORMATION COURSE FINAL GRADES

Α	940-1000 points	NC	No Credit. Note: This Course Grade
A-	900-939 points		must be stated in the approve
B+	870-899 points		Course Catalog Description.
В	840-869 points		
B-	800-839 points	UW:	Unofficial withdrawal assigned by
C+	770-799 points		Registrar. Student stopped
С	700-769 points		attending classes and did not
D+	640-699 points		submit required documents to the
D	600-639 points		Admissions & Records office.
F	0-599 points		
		۱۸/۰	Withdrawal assigned by Registran

W: Withdrawal assigned by Registrar.
Student stopped attending classes
and submitted required
documents to the Admissions &
Records office.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### Quests

This class is not graded like your other classes. While most classes have the teacher decide on your grade, your final grade in this class will be decided by both you and the professor. None of the assignments are graded. Rather you will receive thorough feedback on everything you submit, only without a number/letter grade. Both in the middle and at the end of the semester, every student will meet with the professor, and the student will have to make a case for what grade they deserve in the course using their participation, assignments, and learning as evidence. Throughout the semester, students will have to select, complete, and submit assignments from the following list:

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
<ul><li>Podcast</li><li>Art Piece</li><li>Video Essay</li><li>Reflection</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Close Reading</li> <li>Applied         <ul> <li>Philosophy</li> </ul> </li> <li>Argument Map</li> </ul>	<ul><li>Question</li><li>Research</li><li>Self-testing</li></ul>	<ul><li>Meme</li><li>Reading Group</li><li>Peer-</li></ul>
Reflection	ChatGPT     Evaluation		Testing

Category 1 assignments are the most rigorous and require more research while Category 4 assignments tend to be more creative and reflexive. Cat1 assignments are also stronger evidence for a high grade than Cat4 assignments. Instructions and grading specifications for each assignment can be found on Moodle in the "Assignment Manual" document. Here are the instructions for assignments:

- 1) Students must turn in assignments on the scheduled due date (for a total of 8 assignments).
- 2) Students must turn in at least one assignment from each category (the other four assignments are up to students. However, remember that your final grade is based on your effort and Category 1 assignments are worth more than cat4 assignments. As such, if you want a high grade, you'll need to make sure to do make sure you do more than just one cat1 or cat2 assignment). Don't argue for an A at the end of the semester if you've turned in five cat4 assignments.
- 3) Each assignment must be on an assigned text/author we cover during the semester. Students should not submit work on an author not studied in class nor on a text or idea we do not cover. Refer to the schedule below for more information.
- 4) Students are welcome to re-do failed assignments. All re-dos must be turned in to the proper Moodle dropbox (which will open after feedback is provided) by their due dates.

## **Discussion Days**

Every 2-3 weeks we will hold an in-class discussion day meant to tease out the nuances of each theory we discuss this semester (see schedule). For class, students will have to prepare a written answer to the given question and be ready to present and discuss their ideas with the class. Your discussion days paper must:

- a) Answer the entire question.
- b) draw from the pool of philosophers and philosophical arguments we covered so far in the class.
- c) provide an argument for your position (unless the prompt asks otherwise).
- d) be turned in on the appropriate forum on Moodle before the discussion day.
- e) be at least two paragraphs long.

<u>Participation will be tracked.</u> If you do not like to participate in public dicussions, you are invited to start or participate in virtual pariticipation by responding to a couple of your peer's posts. <u>Every student is in fact invited to start the conversation early and respond to their peer's posts.</u> Your professor will be engaging with your posts online too, so be sure to check on them.

## **Final Overall Reflection**

At the end of the semester, students will be asked to meet one-on-one with the professor to discuss their learning experience in the course. In preparation for this meeting, students will be asked to submit a final reflection paper addressing their overall learning experience in the class. The final reflection paper should be no longer than 3 pages and answer each the following prompts separately:

- a) Discuss your process as a learner: evaluate your engagement with course content by reflecting on how you handled all aspects of this course. What specific parts of your process worked and what parts would benefit from some adjustments? Why?
- b) Discuss the products you generated as demonstrations of your learning: evaluate how your work has changed across the semester. Did certain elements improve more than others? Did certain elements become easier or more challenging? Describe.
- c) What will you do with this knowledge in future semesters? Make a commitment to yourself.
- d) What have you learned about yourself—as a learner and a member of a learning community—in this course?
- e) Considering points a-d, what final grade do you believe you deserve and why? What is this grade a reflection of? How is it a fair representation of your learning this semester? Make sure to provide evidence for your reasoning by drawing on your work and participation throughout the semester.

# COURSE, PROGRAM, AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND OTHER INFORMATION

#### **Attendance Privilege Policy:**

Attendance and participation affect your grade indirectly in this course. Rather than taking away points and coercing you to be in my class, this class's attendance policy works more like a credit score. The more you attend and participate (i.e., the more effort you show) the more exceptions you become privileged to. In other words, if you regularly show up and attend the full class time, participate, and come to my office hours, you will benefit from privileges such as late submission allowances, rounding up of points, excused unexcused absences, late make ups etc.... However, if you only show up a few times, don't turn in assignments, and are generally absent throughout the semester, you will not be privy to these privileges. This is also how I decide to round up your grades at the end of the semester. Such that, if you tried your best but only made an 89% in the course, I will give you a final grade of an A-. But if you were mostly absent and silent throughout the class, then you will receive your original grade of B+.

#### **Network Etiquette:**

Remember your "netiquette," or network etiquette. Although you may traditionally interact informally with friends and family when you are online, it is important to note that this is a classroom environment and students must adhere to high standards of academic behavior. This classroom is a safe space for all ideas. Any comments, jokes, or remarks that denigrate the worth of an individual's physical/mental ability, body size, religion, race, creed, ethnic background, sexual preference, or gender are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

- a. Do not say things in an email or forum post that you would not say face to face.
- b. Be polite, concise, and remember that all-caps signify yelling.
- c. Do not send forwards to the class list or to the professor.
- d. Proofread. Please avoid texting language, lack of punctuation, capitalization, or inappropriate signatures.
- e. Emojis should not be used in graded assignments. You are welcome to use them in informal writing.

#### **Email Policy:**

Triton email is the official means of communication at the university. Every communication with the professor should occur through UOG's official email. It should include a subject line and a body text. The email's body should include a proper salutation and clear explanation of its purpose. The professor will respond to email within 1-2 business days. The professor will respond to weekend or holiday emails at their own discretion. If you need to reach the professor urgently, hope for the best, but expect the worst (attendance policy qualifies how you can hope better).

## **Plagiarism Statement:**

As per the Student Handbook, students are responsible for turning in their own original work for every class that they officially attend at the University of Guam. Due to this plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty (AKA cheating) and will be rewarded with a failing grade for the assignment (without possibility of making up lost points). The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited, to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials. **EVERY ASSIGNMENT THAT YOU TURN IN WILL BE FILTERED THROUGH Turnitin.com TO CHECK ITS ORIGINALITY.** 

## **Artificial Intelligence Statement:**

ChatGPT is an amazing tool that will continue to be perfected. That being said, it is by no means perfect, and cannot write the kinds of assignments I am asking you to write. Think of AI as an assistant. While an assistant is extremely helpful, it cannot do the work for you. Here are some guidelines for how to use AI in one of my classes:

guidelines for flow to use Ai in one of fifty classes.				
Do use A.I. to:		Don't use A.I. to:		
-	Proofread your essay.	-	Write your essays/assignments.	
-	Help you put thoughts into words.	-	Provide an argument	
-	Help you think of a word.	-	Think of a topic for your projects/assignments	
-	Help you reword sentences.	-	Qualitatively evaluate scholarly resources.	
-	Help clarify your flow and syntax.	-	Rigorously summarize a philosophical position.	
-	Get an idea/Talk it out.	-	Provide an opinion.	
-	Help you think of a clever title for your essay.	-	Think of a moral position.	

Write an email to your professor

## **EEO/ADA Statement:**

#### **ADA Policy and Commitment to Student Learning**

The University is committed to maintaining the campus community as a place of work and study for faculty, staff and students, free of all forms of discrimination and harassment. If you experience harassment or discrimination, then you should report it immediately to the EEO/ADA &Title IX Office, Institutional Compliance Officer (671) 735-2244 located in Dorm 1. For immediate assistance in an emergency call 911.

#### **ADA Accommodation Services**

If you are a student with a disability who will require an accommodation(s) to participate in this course, please contact the Disability Support Services office to discuss your specific accommodation needs confidentially. You will need to provide me with a Faculty Notification letter from the DSS counselor. If you are not registered, you should do so immediately at the Student Center, Rotunda office #6, ph/TTY: 735-2460, or uogdss@triton.uog.edu to coordinate your accommodation request.

#### **COURSE CALENDAR\***

\*Tentative Schedule. Official Schedule can be found on Moodle

**WEEK 1: Introduction to the Course** 

08/13: Course Session 1

**NO CLASS** 

**08/15: Course Session 2**Introduction to the course

## WEEK 2: Introduction to Philosophical Thinking and Arguing pt 1.

08/20: Course Session 3

**Introduction to Philosophical Part 2** 

Watch: Crash Course Philosophy episodes 1, 2, and 3

08/22: Course Session 4

Read: Attacking Faulty Reasoning Chapters 1 and 2

## WEEK 3: Introduction to Philosophical Thinking and Arguing Pt. 2

08/27: Course Session 5

Metaphysics and the Learner's Paradox

Read: Plato's Meno 80a-87c

#### 08/29: Course Session 6

#### **Discussion Day 1**

Students must come prepared with an argument on a particular topic of their choice. We will take class to listen, analyze, and communally discuss each presented argument. The argument must 1) follow the logical structure of argumentation, 2) avoid fallacious thinking, 3) be either deductive, inductive, or adjective in nature. The topic of the argument must be 1) philosophical in nature (must be metaphysical, epistemological, or normative), 2) about the real world, 3) must be on some debated knowledge (for example, arguments about the validity of evolution or vaccines are not acceptable as per topic requirement #2). On top of preparing an argument, students must be ready to engage with their peers by either 1) offering counter-argument, 2) offering more evidence to support the argument, 3) discussing the argument's implications, 4) analyzing the logical structure of the argument, and/or 5) offering an example that clarifies the argument. While you are encouraged to come up with your own argumentative topic, here are a few ideas that you are free to choose from:

- 1) Are we free or are we determined by external forces?
- 2) Should Guam remain a territory, seek sovereignty, or aim for statehood?

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#### **COURSE CALENDAR**

- 3) Should doctors respect patient autonomy or act solely to promote the health of their patients?
- 4) Are we in a simulation or is everything really, real?
- 5) Does everyone deserve equal respect?
- 6) What is the end of a human life?
- 7) Are values and morality real or made up?
- 8) Should we eat animals?
- 9) Is euthanasia an ethical medical practice?
- 10) Are our intentions more important than the consequences of actions?

## **WEEK 4: METAPHYSICS – WHAT IS REAL?**

09/03: Course Session 7
The Allegory of the Cave

**Read:** Plato's Republic "The Allegory of the Cave"

09/05: Course Session 8

**Descartes' Metaphysical Skepticism** 

Read: Descartes' Meditation on First Philosophy Meditation 1

## **WEEK 5: METAPHYSICS – WHAT IS REAL?**

**09/10**: Course Session 9 Simulation Hypothesis

Read: Nick Bostrom's "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?"

09/12: Course Session 10
Anti-Simulation Hypothesis

In-class viewing: Futurama – "All the way down"

Read: Marcelo Gleiser "Why Reality is Not a Video Game – And Why it Matters"

#### **WEEK 6: SELF AND AGENCY**

09/17: Course Session 11

Discussion Day 2 – Are we in a simulation?

Students must write on one of the three topics below:

1) Let us say that a strange creature from another dimension tells you that you are a simulated NPC that is given the illusion of self-consciousness. While you don't believe it at first, it literally rewrites reality in front of you, even visually representing the fundamental code of reality that organizes the simulation. After the existential meltdown you are

bound to experience, there remains one final question: What do you do with that information? Or to increase the weight of our question: What should humans do with this knowledge? In other words, students must assess the usefulness of the simulation hypothesis for human life.

- 2) If we in fact live in a simulation, this brings us to a very important question about ourselves: Are you real? Are you really the product of your own decisions and will, or are you the culmination of coding lines in a powerful machine—like a thought in a brain? In other words, is Descartes right when he claims the certainty of his own existence?
- 3) Okay, maybe we are not in a simulation, but the simulation hypothesis brings up many other questions. One such question is about the moral status of simulated characters. While most gamers won't typically bat an eye after killing their sims, enemy soldiers, or invading aliens, some NPCs have what we could call "moral worth". That is, there are some characters in video games or even animated shows that, while being simulated, seem wrong to kill or hurt. People sometime become sad or even angry when those characters are killed or retired from the story. Similar things happen when a character is radically changed to the point where they no longer embody their original identity. Does this mean that simulated characters have some form moral worth? If so, explain in detail what is entailed by this moral worth. If not, then explain why we have these strong emotional and ethical connections with simulated characters and how is this different from what we feel towards other people?

09/19: Course Session 12

**Self and Simulation** 

**Read:** Descartes' *Meditation of First Philosophy* "Meditation 2"

#### **WEEK 7: SELF AND AGENCY**

09/24: Course Session 13

**The Minimal Self** 

**Read:** Shaun Ghallagher's "pre-reflective and minimal aspects of self" in *Phenomenology* 

09/26: Course Session 14

The Minimal Self and Psychopathology

**Read:** Shaun Ghallagher's "The Sense of Ownership" in *Phenomenology* 

**WEEK 8: SELF AND AGENCY** 

10/01: Course Session 15
Buddhist Concept of No-Self

Read: Selections from Dharmacakpravartana Sutra and NagarJuna's Vigrahavyavartani

10/03: Course Session 16
Austronesian Notion of Self

**Read:** Vincente M. Diaz "Voyaging for Anti-Colonial Recovery: Austronesian Seafaring, Archipelagic Rethinking, and the Re-Mapping of Indigeneity"

**WEEK 9: FALL BREAK NO CLASS** 

**10/08:** *NO CLASS* **10/10:** *NO CLASS* 

#### **WEEK 10: THE ONTOLOGY OF THE SELF**

10/15: Course Session 17

## Discussion Day 3 – Self, Agency, and Consciousness

Much of the Western European philosophical tradition operates on the assumption that human agency and moral responsibility is based on the idea of a self-conscious self. In other words, it is because there is an "I" that I am aware of (in other words, because I am self-conscious), that I can take a stand on my action and chose to do x, y, or z. However, over the past few weeks we looked at two non-western philosophical traditions who argue otherwise.

For class, students must reflect on two interrelated topics: 1) the notion and origins of human freedom and moral responsibility, and 2) the certainty of self-consciousness.

First, is it the case that there is a minimal/core self that underlies our consciousness of the world? Do we really need such a concept to make sense of our epistemic agency, freedom of choice, and moral responsibility? If you defend the idea of a core self, make sure to respond to either Buddhist or Austronesian views to argue for why the notion of a core self is necessary/true. If you reject the idea of the core self, then make sure to offer an explanation as to why so many people and different cultures have a first-person pronoun? Why do so many people have a strong sense of self-identity?

Second, many people think that they know themselves best. After all they are them, and who else could know them better than themselves. If we agree with either the Buddhist tradition of anatta or with Diaz's moving ontology, however, it complicates the idea of self-consciousness. If we agree with the concept of anatta, then there should be no self that is me and that I can be conscious of. So, the very idea that you know yourself best becomes mute. If we agree with Diaz, one's sense of self is always changing and conditioned by the external ecological context that we inhabit. Hence, again, the idea that I know myself best becomes mutes. I may know certain parts of my selves best, but I am not a singular self and I am not necessarily conscious of that self from within that self-conscious position. So, for class, students need to reflect on the idea that I have access to myself best: what do we make of this? Do I know myself best? Or is knowing the self something that requires others, a society,

#### **COURSE CALENDAR**

and a community? What is the value of knowing oneself? Can we keep this value without a core self or with dynamic selves?

10/17: Course Session 18

**Modern Enlightenment Epistemology** 

**Read**: Francis Bacon Selections from Novum Organum

## WEEK 11: THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

10/22: Course Session 19

**Rethinking our Relationship to Knowledge** 

**Read:** Edmund Husserl's "The Crisis of the Sciences as Expression of the Radical Life-Crisis of European Humanity"

10/24: Course Session 20
Truth as a Function of Life

Read: Selections from Friedrich Nietzsche's On Truth and Lies in an Extra Moral Sense

#### **WEEK 12: THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH**

10/29: Course Session 21
Truth as a Function of Power

Read: Michel Foucault's Mental Illness and Psychology Chapter 5

10/31: Course Session 22

Read: Foucault's Psychiatric Power 336 -346

## **WEEK 13: THE GOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

11/05: Course Session 23

**Discussion Day 4** – ADHD, Medical Knowledge, and Normality

**Read:** Timimi and Taylor "ADHD is best understood as a cultural construct"

For this discussion, students must contextualize the Timimi and Taylor article within the history of knowledge we discussed over the last three weeks. First, read through the article, and then connect it with the crisis of knowledge discussed by Husserl, Nietzsche, or Foucault. Second, offer a critical discussion of either 1) ADHD as a medical condition or 2) ADHD as a cultural construct of power through your own research and/or one of the three authors we engaged with in this section.

This is not a debate about whether ADHD is a real condition. It certainly tracks real behaviors in individuals. In this discussion, students are asked to reflect on whether ADHD is a "pathology", a medical, biological, and/or psychological abnormality or deviance. Should, in other words, we treat ADHD as a pathological condition that needs to be managed or even cured? Or should we stop pathologizing these behaviors and change society to adapt to real human characters?

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11/07: Course Session 24

Utilitarianism

Read: John Stuart Mill's "On Utilitarianism"

#### **WEEK 14: THE GOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

11/12: Course Session 25

Deontology

Read: Immanuel Kant Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals Chapter 1

11/14: Course Session 26

Modern Ethics and the Banality of Evil

Read: Hannah Arendt's Selections from The Banality of Evil

## **WEEK 15: THE GOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

11/19: Course Session 27
The Banality of Fascism

**Read**: Nalin Ranasinghe's "Ethics for the Little Man: Kant, Eichmann, and the Banality of

Evil"

11/21: Course Session 28

The Banality of Climate Collapse

Read: Hamilton's "The Banality of Ethics in the Anthropocene"

## **WEEK 16: THE GOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

11/26: Course Session 29

The Banality of Democratic Colonialism

**Read:** Downes v. Bidwell, 182 U.S. 244 (1901) + Davis v. Guam (2012)

11/28: Course Session 30

**Thanksgiving Break** 

## **WEEK 17: THE GOOD AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

12/03: Course Session 31 Guam as a Banal Colony

**Read:** Bevacqua and Cruz's "The Banality of American Empire: The Curious Case of Guam,

USA"

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#### 12/05: Course Session 32

#### **Discussion 5**

As we saw over the last few weeks, normalized evil is evil that finds a legitimate existence through an ethical theory. In other words, normalized evil is evil that 1) constitutes a necessary part of our everyday normal living, and 2) is morally justifiable/required by some ethical system. We looked at a few examples of normalized evil— the first being the 2008 economic collapse and its financial consequences, blind obedience to the Nazi regime in Germany, the climate crisis, and even Guam's colonial existence.

For class, students have to research their own example of normalized evil. That is, they must look for an example of evil that is both normalized in everyday life and required by an ethical theory. While you are more than welcome to use your own moral theory, you are free to also use Mill's or Kant's respective ethics. First, you should describe your example of evil and explain why you believe this to be evil. Then students will have to explain how it is a "normalized" form of evil by showing how it is 1) normalized in everyday life and 2) how it is required or justified by a moral theory.

## **FINALS WEEK**

#### **TBD**

\*During Final Exam Week, the class meets according to the Approved Exam Schedule. All UOG classes are required to meet during Final Exam Week.