

U736-101: Introduction to Philosophy

Course Format: Online

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Course Credits: 4

Pre/Corequisites: None; Appropriate for advanced high school and all college students.

Course Description: Welcome to Introduction to Philosophy, a four-credit, university-level course. This course includes an introduction to the subject of philosophy and its subfields: free will and determinism, theories of morality and justice, the existence of God and the problem of evil, mind and matter, and skepticism and certainty. Our aim is to think rationally and critically about rival views on these topics. We do so by assessing arguments offered by Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Mill, Rawls et al. and—as a result—hone our skills in critical thinking and argumentation.

Required Course Materials:

- Miller, Ed, and Jon Jensen. *Questions That Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy*. 6th ed., McGraw-Hill, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0073386560. Note: In this course, the Questions That Matter textbook is referred to as QTM.

Optional/Recommended Course Materials

- Rosati, Connie. Some Suggestions for How to Approach Reading a Philosophical Article or Book. *Arizona.edu*. philosophy.arizona.edu/sites/philosophy.arizona.edu/files/u98/Rosati,%20How%20to%20Read%20a%20Philosophical%20Article%20or%20Book.pdf. (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. Accessed 10 Feb. 2017.
 - Some people find philosophy difficult to read. This article provides an introduction to reading philosophy and provides some suggestions for how to successfully read philosophy texts.
- Matravers, Derek, and Alex Barber. 10 Rules for Writing a Philosophy Essay. static1.squarespace.com/static/572553e4746fb941a5c82e80/t/578085bf5016e19ee3c39fe4/1468040639656/Ten+rules+for+writing+a+philosophy+essay.pdf (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. Accessed 10 Feb. 2017.
 - Writing philosophy can seem daunting. This article provides an overview of writing philosophy, what to do and what not to do, and ten general rules to follow to do it well.
- Huemer, Michael. A Guide to Writing. *Colorado.edu*. spot.colorado.edu/~huemer/writing.htm. (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site. Accessed 10 Feb. 2017.
 - This article is a robust style guide that focuses on some of the most common issues the author has found in student writing. The article provides general tips, as well as common errors and how to fix those errors.

Course Learning Objectives

Unit 1 through Midcourse Exam

- Define philosophy.
- Distinguish between the “tender-minded” and “tough-minded” approaches to philosophy.
- Explain how philosophy and science differ.
- Relate ethical relativism and ethical absolutism to tolerance.
- Compare soft determinism and the free-willist view.
- Contrast Jeremy Bentham’s and John Stuart Mill’s utilitarian views.
- Discuss three moral theories: utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics.

- Apply the accounts of justice offered by John Rawls and Robert Nozick.

Unit 7 through Final Exam

- Explain Norman Malcolm’s version of the ontological argument.
- Evaluate two arguments for God’s existence: the cosmological argument and the ontological argument.
- Explain why Alvin Plantinga thinks that God’s existence is consistent with the existence of evil.
- Consider one objection against each of the following views: mind-matter dualism/substance dualism and the identity thesis.
- Describe William James’s and C. D. Broad’s defenses of religious experience.
- Contrast the views of David Hume and Immanuel Kant on substance and causation.
- Illustrate self-refuting claims.
- Distinguish between three kinds of skepticism.
- Distinguish between “mainstream” and “edifying” philosophers.
- Discuss Augustine’s response to skepticism and Alvin Plantinga’s perspective on Richard Rorty’s relativism.

Course Overview

Module #	Module Topic	Evaluated Topics
1	The Nature of Philosophy	Written Assignment 1
2	Relativism and Determinism	Written Assignment 2
3	Utilitarianism	Written Assignment 3
4	Duty	Written Assignment 4
5	Virtue Ethics	Written Assignment 5
6	Justice	Written Assignment 6
		Midcourse Exam
7	Arguments for God’s Existence	Written Assignment 7
8	Religious Experience and the Problem of Evil	Written Assignment 8
9	Human Nature	Written Assignment 9
10	David Hume’s Empiricism	Written Assignment 10
11	Immanuel Kant’s “Copernican Revolution”	Written Assignment 11
12	Skepticism	Written Assignment 12
		Final Exam

Evaluation Methods

Your final grade will be based on your performance on the following:

1. Written Assignments (50%)
2. Examination (50%)

Written Assignments (50%)

The course requires you to submit a written assignment in each unit. you will need to have a good grasp of the required readings to do well on the written assignments. Read the assigned material slowly, and then reread it. If you have questions about the meaning of terms and phrases, begin by consulting the philosophical dictionary at the back of the textbook. When you write up your responses to the assigned questions, be sure to check your spelling and grammar, and also make certain that you have clearly marked any material you have quoted from other sources. Whenever possible, avoid quotations. If a response is filled with quotations and only a little commentary, it is hard for your course facilitator to see whether you have fully grasped the material. Finally, keep in mind that it may take you a few units to see exactly what is expected of the written assignments. Therefore, submit written assignments one at a time, so that you will have the benefit of your course facilitator’s comments on one lesson before turning in the next.

Examinations (50%)

The course also requires you to take two examinations. The Midcourse Examination (25%) covers the material in Units 1–6. Before taking the Midcourse Exam, all work in the first 6 units of the course must be completed. The Final Examination (25%) covers material in Units 7–12. Before taking the Final Exam, all work in the final 6 units of the course must be completed. Both exams are proctored, closed-book, ninety-minute exams. Both require you to respond to five out of seven essay questions.

Exam Method: Online with Proctoring

This course requires all students to complete exams online with a proctoring service. Students receive two attempts on each exam. If you elect to take a second attempt, the average score of both exams will be recorded.

Grading Scale

The following grading scale is used to evaluate all course requirements and to determine your final grade:

Grade	Percentage
A	93–100
AB	88–92.9
B	83–87.9
BC	78–82.9
C	70–77.9
D	60–69.9
F	Below 60

Pass/Fail Option

Students who enroll in an Independent Learning (IL) course under the pass/fail option will receive a final grade of S in place of a final grade equivalent to an A, AB, B, BC, or C and a final grade of U in place of a final grade equivalent to a D or F.