



Introduction to Philosophy

PHL231.I50

Number of Credits: 3

Days Class Meets: N/A

Meeting Times: N/A

Location/Venue: Online

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Online Office Hours: Online Monday-Friday 1:30-5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Course Description

This is what you will find in the course catalog: "In this course, you will be exposed to some of the major figures in Western philosophy, and through them, some of the most important philosophical questions. You will discuss questions such as: Is ethics all a matter of opinion? What is the good life for human beings? When is the state justified in using coercive power? What is the nature of knowledge, and how do we get knowledge? What is the nature of reality? Can we prove the existence of God?"

This is what I'd like to say to you about taking a philosophy course: philosophy is wildly fun and often quite difficult. This class aims to teach you how to have fun thinking as hard as you can about confusing, important things. Three of your goals in this course should be: (1) to understand "the big questions" of life and the universe: Is there a God? Can we know anything about the world? What are minds? What is the meaning of life?; (2) to see what progress we've made in understanding these questions; and (3) to develop the skills that can help you make progress in answering these questions. The readings, online discussion, and written assignments are all meant to bring us closer to these goals, and your success at each is directly proportionate to the energy and focus that you bring to each. It is expected that

you will read all assignments as many times as need be in order to contribute to the online discussions. It is expected that you will write, edit, and re-write your assignments as many times as you need to in order to submit grammatically perfect, well-reasoned, clearly-written papers.

Prerequisite(s)

ENG 085 and ENG 90.

Course Goals

This course introduces you to some of the more influential discussions found in the history of philosophy and to some of the skills requisite for doing philosophy well. You will read excerpts from the great works of philosophy—many of which require close attention to linguistic subtleties and advanced abilities in reading comprehension—and you will write argumentative essays that defend or attack philosophical positions.

Course Objectives

Through online discussion posts, weekly argument summaries, and written assignments, students in this course will demonstrate 1) comprehension in reading philosophical texts, 2) abstract reasoning in solving complex conceptual problems, 3) knowledge of and ability to apply the scientific method, 4) critical thinking through questioning, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, inferring from and synthesizing information to solve problems in a variety of settings, and 5) understanding of the connections between scientific concepts and technological developments, their impact on society, and the cultural and historical contexts in which they emerge.

This course addresses Associate Degree Outcomes #2 and #4. These Associate Degree Outcomes focus on reasoning and critical thinking.

Students will meet the course's learning objectives via the following types of assignment—the value of each type of assignment in determining students' grades is listed to the right.

A. Logic Quiz	10%
B. Posted summaries of arguments found in readings	10%
C. Posted critiques of arguments found in readings	10%
D. Posted arguments of one's own	10%
E. Summary Paper 1	15%
F. Summary Paper 2	20%
G. Critical Paper	25%

Students will find opportunities to meet most of this course's learning objectives in each assignment, but it is necessary that argument summaries and papers (assignments B, E, and F) are accurate to the arguments summarized (meeting objective 1), and that critiques of arguments, arguments, and critical papers (assignments C, D, and G) demonstrate abilities in abstract reasoning, application of the scientific method where appropriate, and critical thinking (meeting objectives 2, 3, and 4). Students will find opportunities to meet objective 5 in weeks 7-13 of the course, as we discuss, first, developments in the sciences of the mind and, second, the ethics of specific factory farming practices.

Arguments found in any assignment will be judged by the standards of *argument validity*, which will be covered in detail in week 2. Argument summaries and summary papers will be judged by their accuracy to the philosophical argument or article summarized, by comparison to the corresponding course lectures.¹ In addition, when appropriate, both summary papers and the critical paper will be judged by their authors' demonstration of objectives 3 and 5.:

Textbook (chose appropriate options below)

- *Philosophy The Quest for Truth, tenth edition* edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn. Oxford University Press. ISBN: **0190254777**

[Learn about the new textbook program at JC](#)

For account billing questions, please contact the Jackson College Cashier at jccashier@jccmi.edu

Extras

Students should have access to a thorough dictionary. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is the gold standard; it is available in many public libraries. A limited version is available online here: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/>

It would also be helpful to have access to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. It is home to top-notch and up-to-date entries detailing the history and current state of thousands of philosophical discussions. You can find it online here: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

¹ Since most of what we will read is written by philosophers who understand validity very well and who strive to give valid arguments, argument validity may also serve as a rough guide to accuracy in summaries. An argument summary that is invalid is less likely to be accurate than a valid argument summary.

Grading Procedure

Each student's final grade will be determined by grades on the submitted assignments, with assignments weighted as indicated to the right.

A. Logic Quiz	10%
B. Posted summaries of arguments found in readings	10%
C. Posted critiques of arguments found in readings	10%
D. Posted arguments of one's own	10%
E. Summary Paper 1	15%
F. Summary Paper 2	20%
G. Critical Paper	25%

Grades on each assignment will be out of 100 possible points. Thus, for example, if Chitra earns a grade of 100 on the Critical Paper, she will have earned all of the possible points one may earn on the first critical paper; this will make up 25% of her final grade. Had she gotten a 50 on this assignment, she would have earned only half of the possible points. You may think of your final grade as a score out of 100 points available from the assignments. There are 10 points available from argument summaries (since it's 10% of your grade), 10 from argument critiques, etc. On this way of thinking, Chitra's 100 on her paper earns her 20 points toward her final grade.

Grading Scale

GPA	GRADE RANGE
4.0	94-100%
3.5	89-93%
3.0	84-88%
2.5	78-83%
2.0	72-77%
1.5	66-71%
1.0	60-65%
0.5	55-59%
0.0	0-54%

Failure

In addition to having an overall failing score on one's assignments, one may fail this course by submitting plagiarized work. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Submitting others' work as one's own
- Using data, quotations, or paraphrases from other sources without adequate documentation.

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic Honesty is defined as ethical behavior that includes student production of their own work and not representing others' work as their own, by cheating or by helping others to do so.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the failure to give credit for the use of material from outside sources. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Submitting other's work as your own
- Using data, illustrations, pictures, quotations, or paraphrases from other sources without adequate documentation
- Reusing significant, identical or nearly identical portions of one's own prior work without acknowledging that one is doing so or without citing this original work (self-plagiarism)

Cheating

Cheating is defined as obtaining answers/material from an outside source without authorization. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Plagiarizing in any form
- Using notes/books/electronic material without authorization
- Copying
- Submitting others' work as your own or submitting your work for others
- Altering graded work
- Falsifying data
- Exhibiting other behaviors generally considered unethical
- Allowing your work to be submitted by others

Accessibility

Jackson College understands that cultivating a broadly diverse community is crucial to our educational mission and to our foundational commitment to leadership and service. Jackson College is fully committed to ensuring our courses are accessible to everyone including those with disabilities. We are currently working to increase accessibility and usability of our course materials in order to meet or exceed the requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991 and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. For more information about Jackson College's efforts to ensure accessibility please visit the [Jackson College accessibility web page](#).

If you have an accessibility need in any of our classes please e-mail the Center for Student Success at JCCSS@jccmi.edu or visit the [Center for Student Success web page](#).

Support

At the Center for Student Success (CSS), we are committed to providing all students the opportunity to achieve academic success by providing a variety of support services free of charge to Jackson College students. This includes, but is not limited to, peer and faculty tutoring, mental health referral, temporary assistance with transportation, various workshops/seminars, and the TRIO program.

In addition, the CSS staff is committed to adapting the College's general services to meet the individual needs of otherwise qualified students with disabilities, for the purpose of providing equal access to all programs and facilities.

Oasis Center

During a student's college experience, one might encounter situations that impact their learning environment. When these situations occur, support from the Oasis Center is available to provide short-term assistance. If the situation requires ongoing support, the Oasis Center staff can provide that level of support or will assist the individual in securing an outside agency to provide it.

For more information visit the Jackson College Oasis Center webpage <https://www.jccmi.edu/the-oasis-center/>

Health Clinic

Jackson College has partnered with Henry Ford Allegiance Health to offer healthcare to Jackson College students and employees. The Jackson College Health Clinic (JCHC) is located on Central Campus in the Justin Whiting Hall, Room 111. The caring and professional staff at the JCHC provides quality healthcare, including annual exams (physicals, program physicals and sports physicals), acute and chronic illness care and preventative health care (It's Your Life).

For more information visit the Jackson College Health Clinic webpage <https://www.jccmi.edu/health-clinic/>

Dental Clinic

Community members may utilize Jackson College Dental Hygiene Clinic, which offers dental hygiene services while helping students gain experience. Students work under the supervision of license dental hygiene instructor and dentist as they offer preventative services.

For more information visit the Jackson College Dental Clinic webpage <https://www.jccmi.edu/dental-hygiene/dental-hygiene-dental-clinic/>

Course Management

This course defers to the JCC registrar concerning withdrawal, auditing, and grades of Incomplete. Please refer to the registrar for information on these and all other special

circumstances:

http://www.jccmi.edu/student-services/registration/canceled_drops_withdraws.htm.

Makeup Policy

This course defers to the JCC registrar concerning withdrawal, auditing, and grades of Incomplete. Please refer to the registrar for information on these and all other special circumstances:

http://www.jccmi.edu/student-services/registration/canceled_drops_withdraws.htm.

Help

Technical Support

For help with technology questions, contact Distance Learning tech support at distancelearning@jccmi.edu

Help

Available learning services or opportunities may be found at

<http://www.jccmi.edu/CurrentStudents/Services/>.

Accommodations

It is important to contact a Center for Student Success professional prior to the start of the semester in order to receive accommodations in a timely manner. While we will make every effort to coordinate accommodations in a timely manner, failure to self-identify prior to the start of the semester may delay notification to instructors and timeliness of acquiring accommodations. Accommodations do not automatically carry over to the next semester. Please e-mail JCCSS@jccmi.edu or visit the [Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#) web page

Student Responsibilities

In addition to submitting required reading, posting, and writing assignments, students are expected to re-read course readings as many times as is necessary for comprehension, to read and consider classmates' postings on the course discussion board, and to pay careful attention to the instructor's feedback on written assignments.

Attendance- Participation Policy

For online sections

Just as in a traditional classroom course, regular class participation and keeping up on the reading and assignments is strongly correlated with survival in college. It is my recommendation that you plan to do your assignments and take your exams BEFORE the last day they are due. If problems occur, there is time to fix them before the deadline.

In compliance with Federal Title IV funding requirements, as well as college initiatives, I will be monitoring student participation on a regular basis and officially reporting student activity throughout the term to assure compliance with college policy and federal regulations. It is imperative that you log in to the course and actively participate within the first couple of days of the term to validate your enrollment in the course. After that, not actively participating in class may result in you being withdrawn from the course. Being withdrawn from a course can have an impact on financial aid, billing, athletic eligibility, and housing status. As a college student you are responsible for how your participation impacts your academic progress; the accountability lies with you.

Caveat

Some revisions to this syllabus—in light of, for instance, unscheduled school closings, instructor illness, or other procedural improbabilities—may be necessary during the course.

Calendar

Week 1: Philosophy & Education

Objective: to develop an approximate idea of what philosophy is, of how to read and write philosophy, and of what, if anything, is important about philosophy.

Week 2: Logic

Objective: to develop the abilities to (i) recognize argumentation while reading, (ii) distinguish between valid and invalid arguments (which includes the ability to recognize fallacies), and (iii) give valid arguments.

Weeks 3-4: Philosophy of Religion **First summary paper due**

Objective: to appreciate the analytical rigor in the historical debate over the existence and nature of supernatural beings.

Weeks 5-6: Epistemology. **Second summary paper due**

Objective: to understand some of the challenges facing a sweeping conception of knowledge and to become more reflective about one's own beliefs and methods for discovering truth.

Weeks 7: Ethics. **Critical paper due**

Objective: to become familiar with debates over the objectivity of morality.

NB 1: Calendar timelines and assignments are approximate and may be changed at the instructor's discretion.

NB 2: Dates of college holidays and closings to be updated each semester

Important Dates:

DATE	EVENT
JULY 4	FIRST SUMMARY PAPER DUE
JULY 17	SECOND SUMMARY PAPER DUE
JULY 24	CRITICAL PAPER DUE