

Phil 1000: General Introduction to Philosophy
10:00am MWF – Agriculture Building #2-10

Instructor: Kenneth Shields

Email: kwsb56@mail.missouri.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00am-12:00pm; Tuesdays 1:00-2:00pm

Location: Strickland Hall, Room #422

Text: *Reason and Responsibility (15th edition)*, ed. Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau (Wadsworth/Cengage) (Used, borrowed, rented or electronic versions are all acceptable!)

Other required materials: access to (1) Blackboard, (2) a word processor, (3) a PDF reader, and (4) notebook paper

Course Description

Although we will be surveying classic and contemporary problems within the Western analytic philosophical tradition, I want to emphasize that this course is primarily designed to help you develop a certain skill. This skill is sometimes referred to as one's capacity for critical thinking, or as one's reflective capacity. You already have this capacity to some degree – this course is intended to help you develop it. And just as you can develop your physical strength through proper diet and exercise, you can also develop your critical thinking capacity through proper reading, writing, discussion and argumentation.

Course Goals

After completing the entire course, you should be able to:

- Grasp and explain some of the predominant philosophical positions regarding classic and contemporary problems within the three major areas of Western analytic philosophy: in particular, the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.
- Construct formal arguments from informal written passages and essays.
- Distinguish among a variety of different kinds of claims (e.g., ethical claims, ontological claims, conceptual claims, scientific claims, etc.), as well as determine what kinds of evidence such claims would require if to be reasonably believed.
- Better express one's own perspective through writing and speaking, regarding both the philosophical problems raised in this course as well as issues that arise in every day contexts.

What you should expect from this course

While the word 'introduction' might suggest a beginner's atmosphere, it's extremely important that you appreciate just how *difficult* being introduced to something for the first

time can be! Instead of thinking you're about to play a game on the easy setting, you should remember what it's like to attempt something you hadn't done before. For example, an introductory course on playing the piano would be quite challenging if you had no previous experience playing piano. Given that this will likely be your first experience with doing philosophy, you should expect an analogous challenge. But just like learning to play piano, your persistence and diligent practice in this course will be rewarded with the development of your abilities.

What I (and your peers) expect from you

Aristotle once said, "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." It is expected that you will keep this quote in mind, for we will be entertaining thoughts that you might find offensive or morally abhorrent. There will be occasions where you disagree with something I or one of your peers has said, and when that time comes, we expect you to be respectful and temperate when raising your objections. Critical, reflective discussion is practically impossible when tempers are high—try to remember that we are only evaluating thoughts and ideas, not people and their characters.

What you should expect from me

As the instructor for this course, you should expect me to explain the material using clear examples and relevant discussion, to be available during office hours to assist and address any questions you may have, to grade assignments in a timely manner, and to respond to emails within a reasonable time. I plan on offering a questionnaire evaluating how I'm doing as an instructor around mid-semester, but any concerns you have can be discussed with me during office hours.

Course Outline

(Tentative: Material may be added or deleted as time allows or requires. Dates for specific reading assignments will be given in the lectures and on blackboard.)

Week	Topic
1.	<u>Introduction</u> Willingham, "Why Don't Students Like School?" – Blackboard Blackburn, "What is Philosophy?" – Blackboard
2.	<u>Logic and Reasoning</u> Shafer-Landau, "Moral Reasoning" – Blackboard (p.7-14) Feinberg, "A Logic Lesson" – p.1
3.	<u>Morality and Its Critics</u> "Morality and Its Critics" (selected paragraphs) – p.493 Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" – p.501 Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Relativism" – Blackboard [[Summary due Friday by 11:59pm via electronic submission]]

4. Morality and Its Critics
Plato, "Euthyphro" – p.580
Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong, "God and Objective Morality" – Blackboard
5. Human Knowledge: Its Grounds and Limits
"Human Knowledge: Its Grounds and Limits" – pp. 153-161
Pollock, "A Brain in a Vat" – p. 161
Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy (Meditations I and II)" – pp. 201-207.
6. Human Knowledge: Its Grounds and Limits
Kitcher, Believing Where We Cannot Prove, p. 296
Bill Nye versus Ken Ham debate
7. Mid-term Exam
Finish up epistemology
Voting on topics for last half of semester
8. Reason and Religious Belief
Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil" – Blackboard
Johnson, "God and the Problem of Evil" – p. 121
9. TBA [[Critique due Tuesday by 11:59pm via electronic submission]]
10. TBA
11. TBA
12. TBA
13. TBA
[[Rough draft of essay due Friday in class]]
14. Thanksgiving Break
15. The Meaning of Life
Huxley, Brave New World, p.656
Wielenberg, God and the Meaning of Life, p.664
16. Review for Final Exam
[[Essay due Wednesday by 11:59pm via electronic submission]]

Topics to choose from:

- (1) Arguments for God's Existence
- (2) Mind and Its Place in Nature
- (3) Artificial Intelligence
- (4) Personal Identity
- (5) Determinism and Free Will
- (6) Freedom and Moral Responsibility

Assignments and Grading Criteria

Your course grade will be determined by your grade on two exams (mid-term and final), daily note-taking assignments (random days), in-class activities (random days), discussion prompts, and three writing exercises (summary, argument reconstruction, and essay).

The grade breakdown is as follows:

Mid-term Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Writing Exercises:	30%
Reading Comps:	10%
In-class Activities:	10%
Discussion Posts:	10%
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Total:	100%

Course Requirements

- Regular attendance to class, and active participation in class, are both expected. Failure to attend class on a regular basis or repeated behavior that detracts from the quality of the class will result in a request to the Dean to cancel your enrollment in the course.
- Electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, etc.) are *not permitted in class*. Such devices are likely to keep you and your fellow philosophers from fully engaging in discussion. Use of these devices counts as disrupting the class, which will result in your enrollment being cancelled. We won't cover anything so quickly that you won't be able to keep up with just pen and paper. Besides, there's research that suggests that having to copy your notes from paper onto your computer helps with retention and assimilation of the material.
- Exams
There are two exams for this course. Each exam is made up of multiple choice, true/false, position identification, short answer, and essay questions. The exams will not be cumulative. Both exams will be taken in class.

1. Mid-Term	(Friday, 10/07)	(20%)
2. Final	(Wednesday, 12/14, 10am-noon)	(20%)

Mid-term grade: I realize that the first exam is usually the hardest, given that you don't know what to expect or how best to study for it. For this reason, you will have the option of replacing your mid-term grade with the grade you make on your final. So suppose you make a 60 on the mid-term, but an 80 on the final. In this scenario, I will change your mid-term grade to an 80. *But be careful*—it would clearly be

unwise to blow off the mid-term since you don't know how well you will do on the final. The best course of action is to do your very best on both.

- Discussion Board (10%)
There will be discussion prompts posted periodically throughout the semester on the discussion board in Blackboard. You will be required to make at least two posts for each prompt: one original post that addresses the prompt, and one response post that addresses another student's post. Once the prompt is up, you will have one week to make your original post, and then one week to make your response post. The following rubrics assess the *quality* of your postings and not the *quantity* (I'm not looking for simply "I disagree" or "I think this is wrong" – you must elaborate and give *reasons* for your position).

Discussion Posting Grading Criteria	Point Value (out of 10)
<i>Reasons given for one's position:</i> Messages present others with <i>reasons to adopt one's own position</i> , rather than just listing things that you happen to believe, but don't really care if others believe it or not.	5
<i>Message Coherence:</i> Messages explain issues, provide new perspectives, effectively question, or meaningfully elaborate on topic	2
<i>Relevance of Replies to Other Messages:</i> Responses elaborate, contradict, modify, or explain the original message	3

- Essay Assignments (30%)
There will be a summary writing exercise, a critique exercise, and one philosophical essay. The essay will be 850-1,000 words, addressing one of five possible topics. The two writing exercises are intended to help you practice particular aspects of writing an analytic philosophy paper, essentially preparing you for the essay. All writing assignments will be submitted via electronic submission through Blackboard. A rough draft of the essay will be due in class on Friday, 11/18.

<u>Summary</u>	(Friday, 9/9 @ 11:59pm)	(5%)
<u>Critique</u>	(Thursday, 10/20 @ 11:59pm)	(10%)
<u>Essay</u>	(Wednesday, 12/7 @ 11:59pm)	(15%)

- Reading Comps (10%)
These assignments are given for each of the required readings. They will consist of two questions concerning the article assigned. You are to (1) answer the question in your own words, and then (2) cite the author and page number of the article where

you found the textual evidence for your answer. I will post the questions for each reading on Blackboard. Your answers are to be typed up (or hand-written, if done legibly) and turned in at the beginning of the class session when it is due. These assignments will be graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S=10/U=5). Due dates TBA in class. I will replace two of your lowest grades with two of your highest.

- In-class Exercises, Activities, and Peer-Review Assignments (10%)
There will be a variety of in-class activities and assignments which are meant to give you a chance to practice the kinds of skills and abilities this course is designed to help you develop. They are always low-stakes (e.g., less than one percentage point of your course grade) and are all designed to help you achieve the course goals. There will also be peer-review assignments in which another student will give feedback on your paper, and you will give feedback on another student's paper. Grading for these assignments will either be a completion grade or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S=10/U=5). I will replace two of your lowest grades with two of your highest.

Attendance, Grades and Concerns

- Plus/minus grading will be used: A+ (100%-97%), A (96%-93%), A- (92%-90%) and so on. Grades will not be curved. There will be no extra credit assignments.
- *Late work is **not** accepted. Missed exams and assignments may be made up only if there is a verified medical excuse or the equivalent and the request is made within one day after the exam or assignment due date.*
- Concerns about grades or any other "business" aspects of the course should be reserved for my office hours. These concerns will not be addressed during class sessions. If the concern remains unresolved, the next step is to contact the Philosophy Department chair, Professor Matt McGrath (438 Strickland Hall).

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities of a university. Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade on the assignment and, most likely, for the course. The case will be reported to the Office of the Provost for disciplinary action under the University's Collected Rules and Regulations. Discipline may include suspension or permanent expulsion from the University. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting or collaboration, consult with your discussion section leader or with me.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Disability Center (<http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu/>), S5 Memorial Union, 573- 882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.