

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHL 2300  
First Summer Session  
M-F 12:00-1:50

## Instructor Information

### Instructor

Justin Morton

### Email

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### Office Location & Hours

Office 256 | 11:30-12:00 M-F

## General Information

### Description of Course Content

Some questions are only important to people who have certain interests, or who are in certain situations. In this course we will confront questions that ought to be important to every human being that is capable of understanding them. Most people assume a set of answers to these questions without ever thinking about it. In this course we will see just how far *reason* can take us toward their answers.

Here are those questions:

- Is there a God?
- How is God's existence compatible with the existence of evil in the world?
- How should we live? Is there a right to immigrate? How far should free speech extend on our campus?
- How can I know anything at all?
- Do we have free will?
- How can I be the same person as I was 10 years ago, even though almost everything about me has changed?

### Course Objectives

- Understand some important claims (and arguments for those claims) in philosophy.
- Develop the abilities to reason about and debate these issues.

## Course Materials

Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*. Westview Press. Third edition.  
Stephen Hetherington, *Knowledge Puzzles*. Westview Press.

\*Any other assignment besides something from one of these books will be emailed or handed out to you.

## Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading
<b>Week 1</b> Jun. 5-8	Introduction and Syllabus An Argument Against God's Existence Arguments for God's Existence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Teleological Argument</li> </ul>	Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> , Part 9 J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" Peter van Inwagen, <i>Metaphysics</i> , selections from chapters 8 & 9
<b>Week 2</b> Jun. 11-15	Arguments for God's Existence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cosmological Argument</li> </ul> Ethics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free Speech on Campus</li> <li>Immigration</li> </ul>	Peter van Inwagen, <i>Metaphysics</i> , chapter 7 William Rowe, "The Cosmological Argument and the Principle of Sufficient Reason" Selection from Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Altmann, "Speech Codes and Expressive Harm" Huemer, "Is There a Right to Immigrate?"
<b>Week 3</b> Jun. 18-22	Free Will Personal Identity	<i>Metaphysics</i> , chapter 12 Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation" <i>Metaphysics</i> , chapter 11
<b>Week 4</b> Jun. 25-29	Epistemology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Regress Problem and some solutions</li> <li>Can we know anything?</li> </ul>	<i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapter 22: Regress Skepticism <i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapter 23: Foundationalism <i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapter 24: Contextualism <i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapter 25: Coherentism <i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapters 6 & 7: Reliabilism (*These chapters 5-6 pages each, on average.)
<b>Week 5</b> Jul. 2 & 3	Epistemology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can we learn from the past?</li> </ul> Reflections on the course and review for the final	<i>Knowledge Puzzles</i> , chapter 12: Induction

## Movies

Once or sometimes twice a week you will have the option to get together with the students from another Introduction to Philosophy class and watch a philosophically-oriented movie. I've chosen these movies because they each flesh out a theme from the course. After each movie, we'll spend a little time talking about its relevant philosophical themes. However, it will be conducted outside of class, and thus will only be graded for extra credit.

### Movie Schedule

Fri. 6/8	<i>Contact</i>
Fri. 6/15	<i>No Country for Old Men</i>
Tues. 6/19	<i>Minority Report</i>
Fri. 6/22	<i>The Prestige</i>
Wed. 6/27	<i>Groundhog Day</i>
Fri. 6/29	<i>The Matrix</i>

## Evaluation

First Short Paper   10%
Second Short Paper   15%
Third Short Paper   25%
Final Exam   20%
Two Homework Assignments   10% each
Participation/Attendance   10%

The **short papers** will each isolate a reasoning/writing skill, and will build on each other. You will be given prompts as the date approaches.

The **first homework assignment** will help you develop the ability to construct and evaluate formal arguments. The **second homework assignment** will be to write a very short summary of some philosophical issue that you have seen in popular media (the news, a TV show, a Facebook debate, etc.).

## Policies

**Attendance.** You may miss 5 classes, unexcused. Miss any more and you will lose this portion of your grade.

**Electronic Devices.** You may not use cell phones or other electronic devices in class, unless specifically authorized by me. (If, for example, you are waiting on a very important phone call, see me before class.) Failure to follow this policy will result in losing all participation/attendance points.

**Grades.** Grades will be assigned numerically (e.g., "96") and then translated at the end of the course into letter grades, according to the standard university distribution.

## Further Information

### Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any instance may be punished by a report to the relevant dean, as well as failure of the assignment or course. Please see me if you are unclear about either the definition of plagiarism in general, or about whether some particular case is an instance of plagiarism.