

Phil1301.01E—Intro to Philosophy Fall 2025

Dr. Bill Bolin

Office & Hours: Talbot Hall 324, MTW 3:30p—5:00p and by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will allow you many opportunities to explore important philosophical issues that people have pondered for centuries and continue to ponder today. These issues include the sources of knowledge, of identity, of morality, of theology, of justice, to name but several. We will read a number of essays that explore different ideas about where those concepts originate and how our thinking about them might determine our actions. The course is organized so that conflicting, competing, and even complementary theories will be investigated and can be discussed in interesting and civil ways. One textbook is required:

Philosophical Inquiry: Classic and Contemporary Readings. Eds. Adler and Elgin. Hackett, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-87220-867-4

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will write response papers that demonstrate an understanding of important philosophical concepts and how those concepts might be applied to contemporary issues.
- Students will write several exams that demonstrate understanding of the main schools of thought in Western philosophy.
- Students will complete a Transformative Project, examining some aspect of their own lives with regard to at least one significant philosophical concept.
- Students will engage with multiple perspectives in exploring the human dimensions of real-world situations and problems.
- Students will be able to analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
- In written, oral, and/or visual communication, ETAMU students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
- Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- to acquire an overview of the field of philosophy and its major subfields
- to acquire an overview of the various cultural and social influences on thinking throughout the ages
- to formulate articulate responses to the reading assignments and ensuing discussions

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: You'll have four exams, each one covering a major issue in philosophy. These exams might solicit short answers of 3 or 4 sentences, as well as longer, more richly detailed essay responses. These will be in-class exams, and you will need good penmanship to make sure I can read your intelligent responses.

Quizzes: You'll take six open-book quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These timed quizzes will be given in class during the first fifteen minutes or so and cannot easily be made up. Each quiz will be announced as the semester progresses, so be attentive to their deadlines. To prepare for the quizzes, you'll want to have done the reading in advance so you'll know where to find the important information in the assigned selections.

Transformative Project: This assignment will be similar to a response paper, but it will require your examining some aspect of your own life with regard to at least one significant philosophical concept. (The unexamined life is not worth living, as we will hear later this semester.) Specific assignment details are forthcoming.

Extra Credit: An extra credit assignment will be available near the end of the semester.

As a rule I do not accept late assignments, so please be attentive to deadlines. If you must miss an upcoming deadline, you will need to contact me to make *prior satisfactory* arrangements for submitting the assignment. Failure to make prior satisfactory arrangements will result in your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. An extra credit assignment to be named later will be an opportunity to restore points from a missed assignment or quiz or simply to add points to the total grade.

EVALUATION

Assignment Values	Final Grade Ranges
Exams 120 pts. (4@ 30 pts. each) Quizzes 60 pts. (6 @ 10 pts. each) Transformative Project 20 pts. Extra Credit 10 pts.	A=180--200 B=160--179 C=140--159 D=120--139 F=0--119

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important for several reasons, but it is especially important for you to keep up with the assignments in this class. The tentative calendar below offers only the most general description of activities; more detail will be provided in class as the semester goes on. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you must contact me and make satisfactory arrangements for turning in the assignment. In most cases, such arrangements will uploading or emailing to me the assignment by the deadline. Failure to make *prior satisfactory* arrangements will result in your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. As per university policy, excessive absences (three weeks' worth) may result in your being dropped from the course.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty

include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (ETAMU Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]).

AI use in course [Draft 2, May 25, 2023] East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty on one assignment in this course will result in a failing grade for the course.

TENTATIVE CALENDAR

Aug. 26 Overview: Intro to class; reflective writing

Aug. 28 Introduction: Gerson, "General Introduction"; discussion of AI policy for the course

Sept. 2 Knowledge: "Why Study Philosophy"; Knowledge Intro; Plato, "The Myth of the Cave"

Sept. 4 Knowledge: Russell, "How *A Priori* Knowledge Is Possible"; Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Sept. 9 Knowledge: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Sept. 11 Knowledge: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, cont.

Sept. 16 Knowledge: Russell, "On Induction"; Goodman, "The New Riddle of Induction"

Sept. 18 Knowledge: **Exam 1**

Sept. 23 Metaphysics: Introduction; Lewis, "Causation"

Sept. 25 Metaphysics: Parfit, "Why Anything? Why This?"

Sept. 30 Metaphysics: Aristotle, "The Four Causes"

Oct. 2 Metaphysics: Aristotle, "The Four Causes," cont.

Oct. 7 Metaphysics: van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism"

Oct. 9 Metaphysics: Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

Oct. 14 Metaphysics: Lewis, "Are We Free to Break the Laws?"; Nagel, "Moral Luck"

Oct. 16 Metaphysics: Thompson, “The Statue and the Clay”

Oct. 21 Metaphysics: **Exam 2**

Oct. 23 Ethics: Introduction; Lecture on four ethical approaches

Oct. 28 Ethics: Plato, *Apology*

Oct. 30 Ethics: Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”; Nozick, “The Experience Machine”

Nov. 4 Ethics: Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Nov. 6 Ethics: Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”

Nov. 11 Ethics: Bennett, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn”

Nov. 13 Ethics: **Exam 3**

Nov. 18 Religion: Introduction; Anselm, “The Ontological Argument”; Aquinas, “The Five Ways”

Nov. 20 Religion: Rowe, “The Cosmological Argument”; Flew, “Theology and Falsification”

Nov. 25 Religion: Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 2 Religion: Mackey, “Evil and Omnipotence”

Dec. 4 Religion; Williams, “Deciding to Believe”; **Transformative Project due**

Dec. 11 at 8:00a-10:00a **Exam 4** ([Final Exam schedule](#)); **Extra Credit due**

University Specific Procedures

The Counseling Center at ETAMU, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center’s crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by ETAMU have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, an ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at ETAMU are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

ETAMU will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url: <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all ETAMU campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.