



## PHIL 1301.01W—INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2026

12 JAN 2026 thru 07 MAY 2026

### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Keith “Maggie” Brown

Office Location: Online

Office Hours: Wednesday 4pm – 5pm, or BY APPOINTMENT

Office Phone: 940.565.4985

University Email Address: [Keith.Brown@etamu.edu](mailto:Keith.Brown@etamu.edu)

Preferred Form of Communication: **Email/Canvas**

Communication Response Time: Weekdays, within 3 hours; Weekends, within 1 day.

### COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

**Textbook(s) Required:** Callicott, van Buren, & Brown. *Greek Natural Philosophy*. **Only textbook you have to buy.** All other required materials will be open access or written by me. These are supplied directly via D2L.

Software Required: No software

Optional Texts and/or Materials: N/A

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

**3 HOURS.** A general introduction to critical thinking and logic. Study of basic questions of existence and knowledge.

**Satisfies Humanities option of University Studies.**

**Prerequisite: ENG 1302**

This class explores *philosophy as a way of life*. Therefore, as an introductory course, we will touch on how historic methods of philosophers help us discover better ways to live.

We will be accomplishing, then, a reasoned consideration of major concepts, questions, and schools of thought about human existence. This includes explorations of such topics as knowledge, truth, self, freewill, divinity, good, evil, beauty, reality, happiness, and meaning.

### **Course Structure**

This course takes place 100% online and is asynchronous (no scheduled Zoom meetings). Your interaction with me and with your fellow students will primarily take place in D2L, though I am available for Zoom office hours by appointment (contact details below, on the home page and syllabus). As I am an existential philosopher by training, expect a lot of discussions that ask you to apply our course materials to conversations with your fellows and myself. Basically, we will always ask—What does it mean to be human? How can we heed the vocation of humanization? How can we improve our reasoning to improve our lives?

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Analyze key concepts and underlying assumptions associated with critical reflection on life.
2. Connect personal issues with cultural and historic traditions.
3. Critically evaluate possible actions/solutions for addressing philosophical and ethical issues.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Minimal Technical Skills Needed:  
Access D2L and other online resources

Post in Chat/Discussion Rooms  
Submit work via assignment portals.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS**

**Podcast with lectures, Videos with lectures, and written materials created by the instructor to get students thinking.**

### **Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course**

- Be prepared to question the foundations of your own perspective on life, the universe, and everything.
- Respectfully interact with and take seriously perspectives different from your own.

- Be comfortable with complexity and ambiguity! Philosophical questions do not have single "right" answers, just as most of our global problems rarely have a single, easy fix.
- Cite sources, giving credit to where you obtain information.
- Make the commitment to spend at least 10 hours a week reading the assignments, reflecting on the material covered, questioning your friends/family, and participating in other activities throughout the course.

## GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

Total points corresponding to the final letter grades

- A = 900-1000 Points
- B = 800- 899 Points
- C = 700- 799 Points
- D = 600- 699 Points
- F = 599 & > Points

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Discussions	45%
Journal Entries	35%
MidTerm Project	10%
Final Project	10%
TOTAL:	100%

### Assessments

1. **Discussions:** 6 discussions worth a total of 450 points (75 points each). There will be a **short reading quiz** which you must complete before doing the discussion.
2. **Journals:** 7 entries worth a total of 350 points (50 points each). There will be a **short reading quiz** which you must complete before doing the journal exercise.
3. **MidTerm:** A mixed project that includes a short test (20 points) and a philosophical self-reflection project in two parts (80 points); total of 100 points.

4. **Final:** A mixed project that includes a short test (20 points) and a philosophical self-reflection project in two parts (80 points); total of 100 points.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

### LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce 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](https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm)

Zoom Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-Zoom-system-requirements-Windows-macOS-Linux>

## 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](mailto: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, a TAMUC 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>

## **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

Please interact with me as needed via email or schedule a Zoom chat.

## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **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.

### **University Specific Procedures**

#### **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:

<https://www.etamu.edu/student-code-of-conduct/>

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>

#### **ETAM Attendance**

For more information about the attendance policy, please visit the webpages:

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalinformation/attendance.aspx>

#### **Academic Integrity**

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Students Academic Integrity Policy and Form**

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

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.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 Services

Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

**Phone (903) 886-5930**

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

Website: <https://www.tamuc.edu/student-disability-services/>

### **Nondiscrimination Notice**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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/rulesProcedure s/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

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

## **A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health**

### **Counseling Center Services**

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, 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](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel)

## **COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR**

Dates below are the FIRST DAY of each week in the course. Journals and discussions will alternate week to week. Both kinds will be due on the FOLLOWING Tuesday.

EXAMPLE: Week one (Aug 25), you read Plato's Apology of Socrates. Your reaction to that classic text will be an assignment due on TUESDAY Sep 02 *before* 11:59pm. This is to give you plenty of time to read/watch all materials and then get your work in on time.

***IMPORTANT: The materials from the required textbook are about ancient Greek thinkers. However, each week will have supplemental material that helps you connect what they started back then with where we are today.***

1. **WEEK 1:** Getting Underway: How do we understand "Philosophizing"?  
Plato, APOLOGIA (Trial of Socrates), Part 1  
Brown, Getting Philosophy Back.  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
2. **WEEK 2:** Finding the Beginnings  
Plato, APOLOGIA (Trial of Socrates), Part 2  
Brown, Concerning Origins.  
**Journal 1, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**

This and all materials for the week on D2L.

3. **WEEK 3** : Wonder, Doubt, and Other Human Resources  
Brown, *The Sources of Philosophy*.  
Brown, *On Loving Struggle*  
**Discussion 1, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
4. **WEEK 4**: Human Narratives and the Need to Have a Story.  
From Required Textbook, *Greek Natural Philosophy*, Chap 1 “Mythopoeic  
Worldview.”  
**(You can read the intro if you want but not necessary.)**  
**Journal 2, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
5. **WEEK 5**: Looking for What Matters with the First Thinkers.  
Textbook, Chap 2: “The Milesian School: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes.”  
**Discussion 2, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
6. **WEEK 6**: The Relativity of Cultures and the Power of Language/Reason.  
Textbook, Chap 3: Xenophanes and Heraclitus. (This reading includes a short  
revisit with Old Socrates from a different perspective as well as two thinkers who  
came before him.)  
**Journal 3, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
7. **WEEK 7**: Thinking about Reality  
From Textbook, Chap 4: “The Eleatics.” *IMPORTANT: Only read the section on  
Parmenides.*  
**Discussion 3, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
8. **WEEK 8: MIDTERM—Reflecting on the world around you**  
Project details are online.  
Brown, “Looking around: Discovering your World.”  
Brown, “Where we have gone in the course, where we may be going”  
**Journal 4, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**
9. **WEEK 9**: Mind, Matter, and Truth.  
From Textbook, Chap 5: The Qualitative Pluralists (1): Anaxagoras.  
**MIDTERM—Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
10. **WEEK 10**: Elemental Processes, Creative Combinations  
From Textbook, Chap 6: The Qualitative Pluralists (2): Empedocles.

**Discussion 4, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**

Supplemental materials on D2L.

11. **WEEK 11:** Is it Just Atoms Bouncing Around a Void... Is that All There Is?  
From Textbook, Chap 7: The Atomists  
**Journal 5, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
Supplemental materials on D2L.
12. **WEEK 12:** From ancient Greece to ancient China by way of Winnie the Pooh  
Selections from *The Tao of Pooh*.  
**Discussion 5, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
13. **WEEK 13:** The Watercourse Way  
*Dao De Jing* , Part 1.  
**Journal 6, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
14. **WEEK 14:** Carefree and Spontaneous  
Dào Dé Jing, Part 2. All materials on D2L.  
**Discussion 6, TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
15. **WEEK 15:** Trembling with Uncertainty  
Brown, "Beings of Enlightened Belief are We"  
Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity* (selections)  
**Journal 7, Due TUESDAY before 11:59pm.**  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.
16. **FINAL PROJECT: "Reflecting on Your Self in the World"**  
Project details are online.  
Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity* (selections)  
This and all materials for the week on D2L.  
**FINAL PROJECT due TUESDAY OF FINALS WEEK before 11:59pm. I cannot accept late work for this assignment.**