



# PHIL 1301.01W—INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

COURSE SYLLABUS: SUMMER 5W2 2026

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Keith “Maggie” Brown

Office Location: Online

Office Hours: BY APPOINTMENT on Zoom, D2L, or FaceTime

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.

## CATALOG 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

## INSTRUCTOR’S Interpretation

This course introduces philosophy not as a specialized academic discipline but as a way of life — a practice of careful critique of our situation arrived at by engaged communication. Over five weeks, students develop and sustain a personal guiding question through encounters with Mary Midgley, bell hooks, Ursula K. Le Guin, the Pre-Socratics, the Dao De Jing, Alan Watts, and Karl Jaspers, alongside chapters from the instructor’s in-progress textbook *On the Way: Existential Elucidation and the Transgressive Life*. Students acquire vocabulary and techniques for self-reflection and decision-making, and practice basic critical observation — the move from “What is X?” to “How is X?” — applied to everyday experience.

The course is built on the conviction that philosophizing is the craft of making beautiful questions, and that every person, regardless of major or background, already does some kind of philosophizing in everyday life. The five modules invite students to do it more deliberately, more carefully, and in conversation with thinkers across centuries and traditions.

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate philosophy as a way of life rather than as a narrowly academic discipline.
2. Develop and sustain a personal philosophical question across multiple traditions and sources.
3. Practice basic phenomenological observation by shifting from “What is X?” to “How is X?” in their engagement with everyday experience.
4. Engage critically with philosophical voices drawn from Western, Eastern, ancient, and contemporary traditions.
5. Communicate philosophical reflection in clear written form through sustained journaling and culminating project work.

## Required Materials

All course materials are provided through the D2L course site. There is no textbook to purchase.

- Brown, Keith “Maggie.” *On the Way: Existential Elucidation and the Transgressive Life* (selected chapters from instructor’s in-progress textbook)
- Midgley, Mary. “Philosophical Plumbing.”
- hooks, bell. “Theory as Liberatory Praxis.”
- Le Guin, Ursula K. Selections from *A Wizard of Earthsea*.
- Lu, Wenlong, and Keith “Maggie” Brown. Selections from the *Dao De Jing* (collaborative translation).
- Callicott, J. Baird, John van Buren, and Keith “Maggie” Brown. Excerpts from *Greek Natural Philosophy: The Presocratics and Their Importance for Current Environmental Philosophy*.
- Watts, Alan. Selection from *The Wisdom of Insecurity*.
- Supplementary audio and video materials provided in D2L.

## Course Requirements

- Minimal Technical Skills Needed:
- Access D2L and other online resources
- Post in Journal/Discussion sessions.
- Submit work via assignment portals.

## Course Structure

The course is delivered in five week-long modules through Brightspace D2L. Each module follows the same rhythm:

- Four texts (combination of readings, podcast episodes, and video lectures).
- Four short attention quizzes — one per text — designed to confirm engagement with the material. Quizzes are retakeable for full credit.
- Two collaborative journal entries (minimum 150 words each; no upper word limit). Journals are evaluated for completion, not for “correctness.”
- One end-of-module assignment, which builds on the week’s readings and journal work.

The course is fully asynchronous, but module deadlines are sequential. Students are expected to engage with module materials across the week rather than concentrating their work at the week’s end.

## 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

Component	Count	Weight
Attention Quizzes (4 per module)	20 total	30%
Journal Entries (2 per module)	10 total	30%
End-of-Module Assignments	5 total	40%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

## Course Schedule

All five modules share the same internal rhythm (four texts → four quizzes → two journals → one end-of-module assignment). The table below outlines the theme, principal sources, and culminating assignment for each module.

Week	Module Theme & Principal Sources	End-of-Module Assignment
Week 1 07/06/26	<b>Module 1 — “Philosophy is a way of life...”</b> Mary Midgley, “Philosophical Plumbing”; IAI talk with Midgley; Brown, <i>On the Way</i> , Ch. 1 (“Getting Philosophy Back”); video lecture by Dr. Maggie.	“Creating the Question You Will Carry This Semester” — formulate the guiding question that will anchor the rest of the course.
Week 2 07/13/26	<b>Module 2 — “Philosophizing is the craft of making beautiful questions...”</b> bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Praxis”; hooks audio; Brown, <i>On the Way</i> , Ch. 2 (“Concerning Origins”); video lecture by Dr. Maggie.	“WHATIFICATION” — engage an everyday object through “How?” questions and produce a short reflective essay.
Week 3 7/20/26	<b>Module 3 — “The five powers of sorcery...”</b> Selections from Le Guin, <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> ; Le Guin audio (NBA acceptance speech); Brown, <i>On the Way</i> , Ch. 3 (“About Sorcery”); video lecture by Dr. Maggie.	Locate one of the five powers (wonder, doubt, foundering, ultimate situations, authentic communication) in your own experience and write a philosophical reflection.
Week 4 7/27/26	<b>Module 4 — “On the Way...”</b> Lu/Brown, selections from the <i>Dao De Jing</i> ; Karen Armstrong on the Axial Age; Brown, <i>On the Way</i> ,	“WATERIFICATION” — spend a day in deliberate relationship

	Ch. 4 (“Drift and Transit”) drawing on Callicott/van Buren/Brown on the Pre-Socratics; video lecture by Dr. Maggie.	with water, engage it through “How?” questions, and produce a short reflective essay.
Week 5 8/3/26	<b>Module 5 — “Finding Our Way...”</b> Selection from Alan Watts, <i>The Wisdom of Insecurity</i> ; Watts audio; Brown, <i>On the Way</i> , Ch. 5 (“Finding Our Way”); video lecture by Dr. Maggie.	“The Question You Carried” — return to the Module 1 guiding question and integrate at least three sources from across the course. Reflective essay or creative portfolio with artist’s statement.

## 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>

#### ETAMU 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/rulesProcedures/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)