



PHIL 1301.01W—INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 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

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

Communication Response Time: Weekdays, within 5 hours; Weekends, within 1 day.

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required:

Core Text: Batchelor, Stephen. Buddha, Socrates, and Us: Ethical Living in Uncertain Times. Yale University Press, 2025.

Primer: Brown, Keith “Maggie.” On the Way: Existential Elucidation and the Transgressive Life. Sparrowhawk Publications, in progress (course packet chapters distributed via D2L).

Additional short readings, original essays, and video supplements assigned week by week; see Course Outline / Overview below and the D2L course shell for direct links.

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

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

Attention Quizzes	10%
Journal Entries	30%
Group Work	30%
MidTerm Project	15%
Final Project	15%
TOTAL:	100%

Assessments

1. **Regular attention quizzes:** One per week, 16 total.
2. **Journals:** Ten over course of semester. Completion-graded.
3. **Group work:** Five group exercises where you share your thoughts and questions with others in the course.
4. **MidTerm:** A two-part philosophical self-reflection project (Whatification and Waterification) that asks you to examine things you take for granted.
5. **Final essay:** A two-part philosophical self-reflection project (Getting Beyond Identification, and The Question You Carried, the Wisdom You Found) that asks you to explore your beloved beliefs and what you learned while in this course.

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

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.

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

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

COURSE OUTLINE / OVERVIEW

All dates are the Monday of each week except first week.

Week of Aug 17 contains the first class day for this course.

Week / Date	Module & Topic	Core Readings	Due
Week 1 Aug 20	The Call to Question	Batchelor, Prologue; On the Way Ch.1; Essay: On Being Built and Breaking Free	Journal 1; Quiz 1
Week 2 Aug 24	Disrupting the Sleepwalker	Batchelor, Ch.1–2; On the Way Ch.2	Journal 2; Quiz 2
Week 3 Aug 31	The Middle Way and Practicing Theory	Batchelor, Ch.3–4; On the Way Ch.2	Journal 3 (Group); Quiz 3
Week 4 Sep 7	Opening the Question	Batchelor, Ch.5–6; On the Way Ch.3	Journal 4; Quiz 4

Week 5 Sep 14	Shipwreck and the “Not-Self”	Batchelor, Ch.7–8; On the Way Ch.3	Journal 5; Quiz 5
Week 6 Sep 21	The Gravity of Finitude	Batchelor, Ch.9–10; On the Way Ch.3	Journal 6 (Group); Quiz 6
Week 7 Sep 28	Institutional Orthodoxy vs. Lived Insight	Batchelor, Ch.11–12; On the Way Ch.3	Journal 7; Quiz 7
Week 8 Oct 5	Synthesis and the Dialogical Self	Batchelor, Ch.13–16; On the Way Ch.1–3 (review)	Journal 8; Quiz 8; Midterm due
Week 9 Oct 12	Holding the Tension	Batchelor, Ch.17–18; On the Way Ch.4	Journal 9 (Group); Quiz 9
Week 10 Oct 19	The Impossible Questions and the Frontera	Batchelor, Ch.19–20; On the Way Ch.4	Journal 10; Quiz 10
Week 11 Oct 26	A Cartography of Care	Batchelor, Ch.21–22; On the Way Ch.4	Journal 11; Quiz 11
Week 12 Nov 2	The Encompassing	Batchelor, Ch.23–24; On the Way Ch.4	Journal 12 (Group); Quiz 12
Week 13 Nov 9	The Disorientation of the Gray	Batchelor, Ch.25–27; On the Way Ch.5	Journal 13; Quiz 13
Week 14 Nov 16	The Active Life	Batchelor, Ch.28–29; On the Way Ch.5	Journal 14; Quiz 14
Week 15 Nov 23	The Ethics of Uncertainty	Batchelor, Ch.30 & Afterword; On the Way Ch.5	Journal 15 (Group); Quiz 15; Final Part 1 due
Week 16 Nov 30	Practicing the Encompassing (Capstone)	Closing circle — no new reading	Journal 16; Quiz 16; Final Part 2 due

Modules: I Awakening from the Natural Attitude (Wks 1–4) · II Deconstructing the Ego and Confronting the Void (Wks 5–8) · III Finitude, Death, and Care (Wks 9–12) · IV Re-engaging the Life-World (Wks 13–15) · V Coda (Wk 16).

Every third Journal (Weeks 3, 6, 9, 12, 15) is a Group Work submission rather than an individual entry.

Dates above assume sixteen consecutive instructional weeks from the first class day. Please check this calendar against the official Registrar academic calendar for Fall 2026, particularly around the Thanksgiving break (week of Nov 23).