

PHIL& 101: Introduction to Philosophy Course Syllabus

Instructor: W. Russ Payne

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Office Hours: Mondays 4-5 pm

Wednesdays noon to 1 pm

Fridays 9-10am

or by appointment

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Philosophy department's web site: <http://bellevueco.edu/philosophy/> (Links to an external site.)

Text: The text for this course is available for free on the course Canvas site and as a PDF or Word document on my personal site linked above.

Course Information

The range of questions that philosophers investigate is perhaps as diverse as can be found in the empirical sciences. We will cover a broad range of topics including but not limited to the nature of mind and consciousness, free will and determinism, knowledge and skepticism and the nature of morality. We will read a broad range of classic and contemporary philosophers. No text purchase is required for this course. All readings will be available free online or on the website for this course.

This course is designed to keep you steadily engaged in learning from beginning to end. There won't be any high stakes tests or major assignments. Instead you will have a regular weekly routine of discussions, short writing assignments and short quizzes. The point of setting the course up this way is to help you succeed. When students give up or fail out of college, it is generally because they neglect their studies of a short while which turns into a longer while and soon becomes hopeless. My hope is that giving you a consistent manageable workload will make it easier for you to stay engaged and active on a regular basis.

Your weekly routine should include getting acquainted with new material over the weekend and early in the week. This will include closely reading of my brief texts and typically a short selection from a philosopher. There will usually be a written assignment due in the middle of the week. This will typically be a few short answer questions, a

short essay or both. If you've prepared and done the reading, this won't take you long. Then the week will wrap up with a short multiple choice quiz on Canvas. If you keep up with the reading and ask questions as soon as you feel lost or confused, you will probably do well.

In case you are considering majoring in philosophy, you should be prepared to answer you parents and friends when they ask what you plan to do with a philosophy degree. Tell them you plan to live well and make a good living. Philosophy is obviously not job training. Studying philosophy clearly doesn't make you better qualified to wait tables or clean teeth. But it does cultivate abilities that lots of employers crave. People who study philosophy learn how to reason well and express their ideas clearly. Employers offering good jobs tend to prize these abilities. So it should come as no surprise philosophy majors earn more than any other arts and humanities major and more than most social science majors as well (the exceptions being the dark arts of economics and political science, but then these are both rogue branches of philosophy). [\(Links to an external site.\)](#)

Course Outcomes

The official outcomes for this course are as follows:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- Distinguish and describe the major branches of philosophical inquiry (e.g. metaphysics, epistemology and ethics)
- Identify philosophical issues and explain them using basic philosophical vocabulary (e.g. identify and explain the various positions on free will: hard determinism, compatibilism and libertarianism)
- Discuss positions and arguments relevant to philosophical issues.
- Formulate and evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Motivate and explain their own philosophical views.

Some unofficial commentary: People come in all kinds of different. What you get out of studying philosophy depends as much on who you are and how you've experienced the world so far as anything I or any other philosopher can tell you. Philosophy provides rich intellectual (and emotional and spiritual) nourishment. But to commit to specific outcomes about what you will understand or be able to do at the end of this course is analogous to a gardener saying plant here and you'll get a nice zucchini. But maybe you are a rose, not a zucchini.

According to Socrates, the point of doing philosophy is to lead the examined life. But the examined life is not a bit of knowledge or a specific skill or ability that can be captured in any sort of course outcome. Leading the examined life does involve applying your capacity for reason in order to better understanding you own nature as a human being and the nature of the world. But given our unique backgrounds, talents and limitations, there is no saying just what route your examined life will take or what perspectives it will open up for you. The real outcomes for studying philosophy can only be identified after the fact. For me to specify the outcomes for your study of philosophy up front would

amount to stating the moral of your story without having read it (much less lived it). One shudders at the arrogance of it.

Though Socrates was among the founders of philosophy as an academic discipline, this hardly gives him the final say about the point of doing philosophy. My motivation for doing philosophy has never been quite so noble as attaining enlightened self-awareness or acquiring wisdom. I've simply found the problems of philosophy to be amusing and absorbing. Finding the interplay of philosophical ideas amusing and absorbing is the course outcome I'd most sincerely wish for you.

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Philosophy is best learned through dialogue and personal interaction. Since this section is online, attendance will be in the form of participating in discussions and Zoom meetups.

Assignments and Assessments: Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on a variety of assignments and quizzes plus your participation on class activities. There will be low stakes reading comprehension quizzes in class, brief essay assignments that may ask you to reflect on ideas from the reading or explain arguments offered by the philosophers we will study. And there will be weekly Canvas quizzes based on the text and assigned readings. Most assignments will be fairly brief, but a few (2 or 3) will be more involved. Assignments and assessments will have deadlines. Points available and deadlines are all posted in the course modules and on the course calendar. There will usually be ways for you to work ahead, but do not fall behind and try not to let things wait until the last minute. I need to adhere to deadlines in order to get timely feedback to the class.

Philosophy is done by critically questioning ideas and arguments. So do this. But there is generally little to be gained by criticizing people. So keep your critical focus on ideas and lines of reasoning. If one of your ideas draws some critical attention, you should (a) remember that it is an idea or argument that is being critically examined, not you, and (b) be flattered that someone considers your presentation of an idea or argument worthy of careful attention. Approach discussions with humble good humor and don't be shy. If you are shy anyway, you can always bring questions and conversation to office hours.

Late work: While I would like to be infinitely flexible, I have found that I cannot both deal constantly with late work and be available to discuss course material with students who are staying on schedule. So it will be your responsibility to make the course deadlines. Plan accordingly. A good deal of flexibility is built into the course. Quizzes must be taken during the time windows posted on the course calendar. Quizzes should be taken by midnight on Fridays. Late assignments will be penalized 10% or 1 point whichever is greater. The one exception, of course, is the final assignment for the course which cannot be submitted late.

Grading: Essay questions and brief essay assignments will typically be graded on a 10 point scale with 9 or 10 point scores representing the A to A- range, 8 point scores

representing B work, 7 point scores representing C work and so forth. Look for written feedback on writing assignments in the assignment, this is the only place my comments on your work will show up. Points for assignments will show up in your grade book. So, at any point in the course, you should be able to identify how many of the available points you have earned. My deliberations for letter grades for the course start with a 10% scale where point totals above 90% are A range, 80% to 89% are B range and so forth. But I may adjust the scale for final grades based on worthy efforts and participation I see over the course of the quarter. This means that if I see you engaged, doing your best and building your critical thinking skills, I'm liable to give you a better grade in the course than a strict interpretation of the point totals would indicate.

The Secret to Success

Stay active and engaged. Being active starts with keeping up with the reading and discussion. Being engaged with the material will show in your writing and participation in discussion. I will be encouraging scholarship and looking for evidence of it and the intellectual maturity scholarship brings. Well-intentioned contributions in class can help you significantly. Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior may adversely affect your grade in the course. You should consult the BC course catalog for information on grading standards at this institution.

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/publications/catalog/> (Links to an external site.)

Maintaining a good learning environment will be your responsibility as well as mine. Philosophy is best learned through actively engaging in discussion of the issues. You may have strong feelings about some of the issues we will discuss. This is fine and it will present no problem so long as we all make respect for each other a guiding principle of our inquiry. While the experience will be new to many of you, talking about the existence of God or the nature of morality with people that disagree with you can actually be fun. Keep in mind that what matters most in philosophy is that we do a good job at evaluating the reasons for and against the views we consider. And we can do a good job at this quite independent of our feelings about those views. That we all end up agreeing is not essential to a fruitful philosophical dialogue. That we are amicable and gracious towards one another is. I take a dim view of cheating and plagiarism. Write your own stuff. I have a duty to report cheating, plagiarism and other conduct that is destructive to the course to administration and student services. I would appreciate not having to act on that duty.

Student Concerns

Should you have concerns about any aspect of the class, I invite you to bring them to me. In any of your classes, if for any reason you don't feel comfortable speaking with your instructor, the usual next step would be to talk with the program chair. Since I am the program chair for philosophy, if for any reason you don't feel comfortable raising your concerns with me, you can bring concerns about this class to the Arts and Humanities Division Dean, Tuan Dang, tuan.dang@bellevuecollege.edu. An additional resource for concerns you find aren't being addressed by faculty or administration is the Ombuds Office: (<http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/ombuds/default.html> (Links to an external site.)).

Affirmation of Inclusion

Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination.

We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect. <http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/goals/inclusion.asp> (Links to an external site.)

Division Statements

You should also the Arts and Humanities Expectations posted here: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/policy.html> (Links to an external site.) Information about Bellevue College's copyright guidelines can be found at: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/links/copyright.html> (Links to an external site.) A good resource for Plagiarism is the Writing Lab: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/Plagiarism.html> (Links to an external site.)

Student Code

"Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services." The Student Code, Policy 2050, in its entirety is located at: http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp (Links to an external site.)

Important Links

Bellevue College E-mail and access to MyBC

All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to MyBC. To create your account, go to: <https://bellevuecollege.edu/sam> (Links to an external site.)

BC offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the Computing Services website.

Disability Resource Center(DRC)

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call our reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. . . . Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc ([Links to an external site.](#))

Public Safety

The Bellevue College (BC) Public Safety Department's well trained and courteous non-commissioned staff provides personal safety, security, crime prevention, preliminary investigations, and other services to the campus community, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Their phone number is 425.564.2400. The Public Safety website is your one-stop resource for campus emergency preparedness information, campus closure announcements and critical information in the event of an emergency. Public Safety is located in K100 and on the web at: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/publicsafety/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Final Exam Schedule

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/classes/exams> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Academic Calendar

The Bellevue College Academic Calendar is separated into two calendars. They provide information about holidays, closures and important enrollment dates such as the finals schedule.

Enrollment Calendar - <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/deadlines/> ([Links to an external site.](#)). On this calendar you will find admissions and registration dates and important dates for withdrawing and receiving tuition refunds.

College Calendar

- <http://bellevuecollege.edu/enrollment/calendar/holidays/0910.asp> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

This calendar gives you the year at a glance and includes college holidays, scheduled closures, quarter end and start dates, and final exam dates.