

Introduction to Philosophy (Philo 101)

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Course Content and Objectives

Philosophy systematically and critically explores fundamental questions about reality, existence, knowledge, and the individual's place in his or her world. This course focuses on two major areas of philosophy: metaphysics, which explores the nature of reality, and epistemology, which questions what we can know and how we gain knowledge. We will read classical, modern, and contemporary selections on these topics. We will touch on the areas of ethics and social and political philosophy (there are many introductory, intermediate, and advanced courses in these two areas). Issues we will cover are: the nature(s) of and relationships between mind and world; the existence and our experience of free will, necessity, and luck; faith, belief, and knowledge about god; whether one's historical and individual standpoint or characteristics (such as gender and race) affect his or her knowledge.

The main goal of the course is to give students a comprehensive introduction to and survey of some important theories in Western philosophy. You also will be invited to critically think about these theories and to relate their central problems to our wider social setting and to your own lives in written work and in class. Overall, you will learn how to read, write, and think clearly and crucially. These logical, interpretive, and creative skills are not only necessary for advancement in philosophy, but are also tools that will profit you in any discipline or profession, as well as in your daily lives.

Readings

Textbook: *First Philosophy: Concise Edition –Fundamental Problems and Readings in Philosophy, Second Edition*, edited by Andrew Bailey (Broadview Press, 2012). ISBN: 9781554810574. It is imperative that you use this edition, though you may rent it or get a used copy. It will be available at Shakespeare & Co. on Lexington ave (as well as other booksellers).

We will read chapters 1, 3, and 4, as well as a few selections from chapters 2, 5, and 6. A few additional readings will be given as handouts (and available electronically as PDFs).

Evaluation and Workload

Your semester grade is based on a combination of: 1) attendance, participation, and preparation; 2) frequent homework assignments based on the readings, the questions appearing in the textbook; 3) two short-essay take-home tests.