PHIL 1000 OL: Introduction to Philosophy (Online)

Instructor: Colin J. Lewis (clewis5@uccs.edu)

Office: COH 4055

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description: The purpose of this class is to introduce you to some of the major issues addressed by humans over the course of time and to show you how philosophers approach these problems. We will cover the questions of knowledge, ethics, free will, the relationship between philosophy and science, and a number of other topics.

Course Objectives: In this course, we aim to (1) introduce a general understanding of philosophy, as well as its evolution over time and across cultures; (2) derive and critically evaluate several influential arguments in philosophy; (3) write arguments either challenging or supporting the claims we consider in the course; (4) broaden a general knowledge base of contemporary approaches to questions in philosophy.

By the end of the course, students will …

• improve their ability to think clearly and logically.
• improve their ability to write clearly and persuasively.
• improve their ability to recognize and evaluate arguments.
• understand a wide range of basic philosophical concepts.
• understand a wide range of philosophical issues and how they relate to other fields of study, including politics, biology, and psychology.
• be exposed to a wide range of philosophical writings on the course topics.

Compass Curriculum: This course is part of the Compass Curriculum. The Compass Curriculum is the signature undergraduate education program at UCCS for all majors and all colleges. This program endeavors to provide you with the tools for professional and personal success that you will need when you graduate. The program includes skills that employers say that they want students to have from their education (critical thinking, oral and written communication, ethics, innovation, problem-solving, understanding inclusiveness, and sustainability).
*Writing Intensive*

Writing Intensive courses help you learn how to:

- Approach writing as a process.
- Revise your written work based on feedback.
- Provide useful feedback to your classmates about their written work.
- Refine your critical and analytical writing skills.

*Essential Learning Outcomes:*

- Gather, critically analyze and evaluate quantitative and qualitative information within relevant disciplinary contexts.
- Apply and integrate knowledge from a range of disciplines, including interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary research.
- Communicate information through writing
- Demonstrate the core ethical principles and responsible methods of your discipline.

*Required Texts* – All texts will be provided via the Canvas webpage or otherwise accessible online. If you have any difficulty accessing a text, or require some other sort of accommodation, please contact the instructor in a timely manner so that the materials may be provided to you.

*Course Requirements / Grade Breakdown*

*Quizzes (20%; Final Quiz 10%), Writing Practice (10%), Argument Reconstructions (20%), Short Papers (20%), Final Paper (20%)*

The structure of this course is arranged around six topics (see the Course Schedule for details). For each topic, students are expected to make substantive contributions via assignments submitted online.

*Quizzes (x7 + 1 Final):*

These ten-point, multiple-choice quizzes are located under “Assignments” on our course website. They function as reading checks. If you do not do the reading, you likely will not be able to answer the quiz questions. You may, of course, use your notes and the articles themselves for these quizzes, but remember that the quizzes are timed – this provides more incentive to take marginal or separate notes while you read for the class. These quizzes are spread throughout the term. Your best four scores will be retained. These are due on Thursdays. A cumulative “final” will be given after the final unit of class, consisting of information from all previous units.
Additionally, students are able to makeup missed points on quizzes. For every question missed, students can e-mail the instructor with corrections and explanations for why the correct answers are the correct ones. Students who submit these corrected answers with explanations can earn up to half of a point back (equivalent of 5/100) for each question corrected. Alternatively, if students are convinced that an answer marked as incorrect is accurate, then the student may petition to have the answer accepted for credit by providing a defense of the answer given.

Writing Practice (x6):

As part of completing a writing intensive course, students are expected to develop and express critical analytical skills. While the primary means to this end will be formal papers, it will also help to have opportunities for practice. Accordingly, in each unit you will be expected to complete a writing practice assignment. Each assignment will have you tackling one of the three major parts of the general essay format: opening and thesis, exposition, and critical analysis. You will be expected to produce a writing sample that demonstrates at least basic proficiency in each of these components. More detailed instructions will be supplied on the relevant assignment page.

Again, writing practice is just that: practice. Still, assignments should be taken seriously as another avenue for working with the material. Practice assignments will be scored 50% on completion, and 50% on the quality of execution. For additional guidance, please refer to the Writing Manual.

Argument Reconstructions (x6):

The ability to generate and dissect arguments is an important skill not only in philosophy, but in many other disciplines as well as day-to-day living. To this end, we will practice the art of argument outline reconstruction. The goal of these exercises is to map an argument as it appears in the text. In each unit, students will be assigned a fill-in-the-blank style argument reconstruction relevant to a particular text from that unit. Students will need to locate the argument as it appears in the text and fill-in the incomplete outline. Scores will be determined by completeness and accuracy of the reconstructed outline.

Reading engagements (x3):

One way in which students will be held accountable for the readings, and also develop their critical writing skills, will be by a series of short writing assignments. Each unit will require students to submit a two-to-three-page reading response that addresses an argument or concept from reading and/or lecture that the student finds particularly interesting. Students may utilize pre-fabricated prompts or write on prompts of their own creation.

These assignments are designed to require you to engage closely with a single issue, but do not require extended treatment. They are less formal in nature than the final paper and do not necessarily need to conclusively resolve an argument so long as a substantive and original issue is raised in the response. They should, however, utilize a traditional essay structure in miniature: introduction, exposition, and analysis, followed by a works cited list. If there is no works cited list attached to a submission, then a score of '0' will be assigned until the paper is re-uploaded with a proper works cited list.
Remember to use assigned primary readings and to cite with the relevant page numbers with your engagements so that I may follow your topic and argument (and, of course, to avoid plagiarism). Do not use secondary readings (e.g., PowerPoints, notes, etc.). Feel free to compare different positions you have engaged with over the semester. Following the deadline for submission, each paper will be evaluated by the instructor and feedback will be provided for the purpose of revision. You may contact me ahead of time if you want to ask questions about a topic.

Final paper:

There will be one final paper (4-5 pages) that should be a revised and expanded version of a previous reading engagement. The length requirements listed are guidelines about the minimum and maximum length of the paper, but you should aim for this ballpark range (it should at least be one page longer than the earlier version). It must be turned in via Canvas according to the submission guidelines in this document. It will be graded according to the same general standards employed for the short paper assessments. If you desire instructor feedback, it is recommended to send a draft of your paper no less than a week before the deadline.

Submission Guidelines / Warnings for ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

(1) Anything that you submit online must be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format. I do not accept .wps or other file formats. If for any reason file attachments do not work, you may copy/paste the body of the text of your assignment into the empty text box on the submission page for each assignment.
(2) I do not accept e-mailed assignments unless otherwise specified. Please submit through the relevant assignment listed on the Canvas page.
(3) Save your files as, “LastName_FirstName_AssignmentName/#” so that I can identify your assignments if I need to download them from Canvas.
(4) 12-point font, standard typeface, double-spaced, and 1-inch margins.
(5) Uploaded to the ‘Files’ tab is a document entitled ‘Writing Manual.’ Please read this document, as it provides detailed guidelines for how to write an effective paper in this course.
(6) All submitted written work will be scrutinized for plagiarism by the Turnitin software, as well as by the instructor. Any work found to have been plagiarized will be subject to penalization. See the section entitled “Plagiarism” for more details.

Grading Scale

A 100-93 / A- 92-90 / B+ 89-87 / B 86-83 / B- 82-80 / C+ 79-77 / C 76-73 / C- 72-70 / D+ 69-67 / D 66-63 / D- 62-60 / Fail <60
**Philosophy and Personal Beliefs**

This is a philosophy course, which means (in part) that we will examine various arguments concerning moral education in particular and morality in general. Some of these arguments may directly contradict your personal beliefs about these issues. In fact, I expect this to happen. Nevertheless, I expect you to think about and assess claims from various perspectives that may be different from your own.

One method you may find helpful to adopt is to “try on” arguments that directly contradict your first intuitions. By this method, you will find the most compelling arguments in support of the claims with which you disagree – when you dismantle them, you will have a strong argument to support your own view.

One of my fundamental goals in this class is for you to enhance your understanding of different perspectives and your ability to critically analyze those viewpoints. Your grade will be based on your understanding of the readings, the philosophical concepts and tools they employ, and your analysis. It will not be based on personal conclusions.

**Schedule**

*NOTE*: The order of readings listed on the schedule below is the recommended order of readings. Documents may not appear in this recommended order in their respective files, so please be wary of this fact. **Primary readings** are in bold font.

**Unit 0: How to succeed in this class (Week 1)**

Readings:

- PHIL 1000 OL - Opening Day
- Lewis, "Writing Manual"
- "Argument Reconstruction"

Assignments: [Unit 0 Quiz](#)
Unit 1: What is philosophy and how does one do it? (Weeks 2-3)

Readings:

- Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
- Unit 1 Review Guide - On Russell’s “Value of Philosophy”: Some Quick Comments
- Bostrom, “Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?”
- Plato, “Euthyphro”
- Unit 1 Review Guide - Breaking Down Euthyphro

Assignments: Unit 1: Bostrom’s argument for the likelihood of living in a simulation, Unit 1 Practice: Opening and Thesis, Unit 1 Quiz

Unit 2: What do we know? (Weeks 4-5)

Readings:

- Plato, “Meno”
- Unit 2 Review Guide - Some Notes on Plato
- Descartes, Meditations parts 1 and 2
- Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding (excerpts)
- Unit 2 Review Guide - Descartes and Locke: Some Notes
- OPTIONAL: British Empiricism
- Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
- Unit 2 Review Guide - Gettier’s Critique of JTB

Assignments: Unit 2: Locke I.2.12, Unit 2 Practice: Opening and Thesis, Unit 2 Quiz, RE 1
Unit 3: What is the good life? (Week 6-7)

Readings:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I
- Unit 3 Review Guide - Aristotle, Virtue, and Human Telos
- Mengzi, *Mengzi* (excerpts)
- Xunzi, *Xunzi* (excerpts)
- Unit 3 Review Guide - Notes on the Early Confucians

Assignments: Unit 3: Mengzi’s argument for the goodness of human nature, Unit 3 Practice: Exposition, Unit 3 Quiz

Unit 4: What is the right thing to do? (Week 8-9)

Readings:

- Mill, “What Utilitarianism Is”
- Unit 4 Review Guide - Mill’s Utilitarianism
- Kant, “The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative”
- Unit 4 Review Guide - Normative Ethics and Kant
- Midgley, “Trying out One’s New Sword”
- Unit 4 Review Guide - Midgley, Moral Relativism, and Meta-Ethics
- Wong, “Pluralistic Relativism”
- Unit 4 Review Guide - Wong and the New Relativism

Assignments: Unit 4: Midgley’s argument against unintelligibility of the foreign, Unit 4 Practice: Exposition, Unit 4 Quiz, RE 2
Unit 5: Are we free? (Week 10-11)

Readings:

- D’Holbach, “A Defense of Determinism”
  - Unit 5 Review Guide - Determinism and D'Holbach

- Mill, “Of Liberty and Necessity”
  - Unit 5 Review Guide - Mill does Metaphysics: An Argument for Compatibilism

- Machan, “A Brief Defense of Free Will”
  - Unit 5 Review Guide - Machan: Free by Necessity?

- Harris, “Life Without Free Will”
  - Unit 5 Review Guide - Sam Harris: Who Needs Free Will?

Assignments: Unit 5: d’Holbach’s argument for determinism (part one), Unit 5 Practice: Analysis, Unit 5 Quiz

Unit 6: What is our nature? (Week 12-13)

Readings:

- Pinker, “The Blank Slate”
  - Unit 6 Review Guide - Engaging Our Nature: The (Myth?) of the Blank Slate

- Prinz, “Where Do Traits Come From?”

- Prinz, Nature+Nurture: Evolution and Culture
  - Unit 6 Review Guide - Prinz: Personalities are not Pre-Packaged
  - Continued on next page
- Unit 6 Review Guide - Human Nature: A Useless Concept?
- Machery, “A Plea for Human Nature”
- Unit 6 Review Guide - Machery Lecture Notes

Assignments: Unit 6: Pinker against the Blank Slate (part one), Unit 6 Practice: Analysis, Unit 6 Quiz, RE 3

Week 14: Final Quiz

Week 15: Final Paper

Late Policy

No late work will be accepted. This is course policy. If you have a crisis, (e.g., you, your spouse, or your child is hospitalized or imprisoned), provide documentation and we will work around it.

Note:

Though it is not expected that the course will change after this syllabus is posted, extenuating circumstances do occur. Changes made to the course will occur at the instructor's discretion. As much advance notice will be provided as possible.

Resources for Students

Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact and register with the Disability Services Office, and provide them with documentation of your disability, so they can determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the Disability Services Office as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that disability accommodations cannot provided until an accommodation letter has been given to me. Please contact Disability Services for more information about receiving accommodations at Main Hall room 105, 719-255-3354 or dservice@uccs.edu. Ida Dilwood, Director.
Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be grounds for failing a student from the course, as well as additional academic sanctions as defined in the Academic Honor Code. Plagiarism, the “use of distinctive ideas or words belonging to another person, without adequately acknowledging that person’s contribution” ranges from the improper use of such sources as internet materials to improper use of classmates’ notes. It is the students’ responsibility to become familiar with the various definitions and penalties for plagiarism. The webpage of the Department of History at UCCS includes detailed information on what constitutes and how to avoid plagiarism: http://web.uccs.edu/history/toolbox/plagiarism.htm

The Administrative Policy Statement for the University of Colorado System can be accessed online at http://www.cusys.edu/~policies/Academic/misconduct.html.

Military Deployment and Military Service:

In order to assist students who are called to active duty the Campus has compiled a set of guidelines that include information on withdrawing from courses. General information can be accessed at: http://www.uccs.edu/~deploy

In part, that information states that “in order to withdraw from the course, students called to active military duty will need to obtain the proper withdrawal form from the Admissions and Records office, their academic dean’s office or the Student Success Help Center. Information about withdrawing and refund deadlines can be found in the schedule of courses. Completed forms need to be returned to the Admissions and Records office. If students are receiving veterans’ benefits or financial aid, each of those offices will need to approve the form. In addition, the form needs to be approved by the Bursar’s Office located in Main Hall on the second floor. Students will be provided a copy of the drop form to retain for their records. The date the form is received by Admissions and Records will determine the amount of any refund.”

Writing Center

UCCS offers free writing support at The Writing Center at Columbine Hall, room 316. Students of all skill levels can benefit from working with peer writing consultants at any stage of the writing process be it brainstorming, drafting, or final editing. The Writing Center is open for 50 minute face-to-face or online appointments from 9am to 8pm Monday through Thursday and 9am to 2pm on Friday and Saturday. Appointments can be made by visiting http://www.uccs.edu/writingcenter/. Call 719-255-4336 with questions about our programming and policies.

Disruptive Students

For information on the Student Code of Conduct or the Disruptive Behavior Policy go to the Office of Judicial Affairs Website: http://www.uccs.edu/~oja/
Campus Emergency Response Team

**UCCS Chief of Police:** Jim Spice, phone: 255-3111, e-mail: jspice@uccs.edu

**Director of University Counseling Center:** Benek Altayli, phone: 255-3265, email:zaltayli@uccs.edu (regarding harm to self or others)

**Director of Judicial Affairs:** Steve Linhart, phone: 255-4443, e-mail: slinhart@uccs.edu