Introduction to Philosophy - (PHIL-1)

Section #: 54802

Meeting Days/Times: TTH 11:00-12:15

Start Date: 08/07/2023 - End Date: 12/08/2023

Instructor: Marisa Maccaro

Term: 2023SP

Room: CCI 203

Units: 3.00

Instructor

Name: Marisa E. Maccaro

Email Address: marisa.maccaro@reedleycollege.edu

Office Location/Hours: See Canvas Course homepage

Welcome Message

Welcome, Philosophers! I’m so excited to teach this course and I’m looking forward to getting to know each of you.

This course is an introduction to three of the main branches of Philosophy: metaphysics (“What exists?”) epistemology (“What can we know?”), and ethics (“What should I do?”). I hope that you will leave this course with an understanding of the ways others have answered these questions and with some intellectual tools that can help you do the same.

Below you will find information about course content, requirements, and policies. Please don’t hesitate to ask if you have any questions. It’s okay if you feel overwhelmed, confused, and/or frustrated while reading this syllabus or at any point throughout the semester. Philosophy’s hard. For everyone. But that doesn't mean you can't do well. The best students approach the subject with humility, curiosity, and a willingness to mess

up. I’ll make mistakes expressing ideas, and you will too. Think of this course as a lab for testing ideas rather than a museum of the pristine ideas you already have.

You can do this. Let’s have a great semester together!

Course Description

This course introduces students to traditional and contemporary views in metaphysics, epistemology, and value-theory. Topics may include the sources and limits of knowledge, the nature of reality, the relationship between mind and body, free will and determinism, the existence of God, and the nature of morally right action. Readings will include selections drawn from the primary texts of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, or Kant, as well as various twentieth century philosophers.

PreRequisites/CoRequisites and Advisories

Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

Advisory: ENGL-1A Reading and Composition

Required Texts/Materials

This is a textbook-free course! All readings and material will be provided by the instructor and posted on Canvas. There is no textbook for the class.

Course Objectives

1. Achieve a familiarity with and appreciation of the philosophic endeavor as a whole (i.e., its scope, concerns, purpose, and methods), the specific endeavors of a number of well-known philosophers, and the relevance of philosophical inquiry to their own lives.
2. Demonstrate a familiarity with and appreciation of the philosophic endeavor as a whole, and the specific endeavors of a number of well-known philosophers, through discussion and writing.
3. Recognize, describe, and distinguish between metaphysical, epistemological, and value-theoretic issues in a variety of texts.
4. Develop skills pertaining to the recognition, clarification, and evaluation of arguments, which they can apply both to the arguments of others and to those of their own making.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Apply standards for argument assessment in evaluating the arguments of the great philosophers and the arguments that the students themselves create.
2. Articulate metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical themes in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, or Kant, as well as some representative twentieth century philosophers.

Early Alert

Reedley College has a team of individuals working closely with instructors to ensure students receive the support and resources necessary for academic success. In addition to messaging you through the Canvas Inbox, I will be using the Starfish Early Alert Program to communicate concerns or praise (kudos) about your progress. Throughout the semester, you may receive an “EARLY ALERT” message from Starfish Solutions.

The message will be sent to your SCCCD student email account and either contain a Kudo or a Flag.

A Kudo acknowledges your hard work, and a Flag identifies an area that may pose a barrier to success in this class. Students receiving a flag will be instructed to either contact me (your instructor) or contact a counselor.

Please follow the email instructions promptly so we can address the issue as quickly as possible. Your success is important to all of us!

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. In order to succeed in this course, active attendance is necessary, and frequent absences will negatively impact your grade. You will get much more out of the course by showing up prepared and bringing in your questions, comments, and concerns as they occur to you while reading. **You will be allowed to be absent from two class sessions without penalty.**

Participation and Engagement

Attendance ≠ participation. Participation is class discussion. It is imperative to your success in this class that you show up to every class prepared to discuss the reading for that day. You will be evaluated on your attempt to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments we discuss. Although a full understanding of the readings is not expected, you should be able to demonstrate that you’ve made a substantial effort to understand them with prepared questions, comments, or criticisms. The aim of participation is to hone your ability to analyze and synthesize philosophical ideas and arguments.

I enjoy talking to students about the material, so don’t hesitate to contact me if you have questions about the material or are struggling with a particular concept. I will attempt to respond to any communication you initiate within 24 hours (48 hours on weekends).

Drop Policy & Deadlines

Drop Policy:

I am committed to your success, and I will do all I can to help you succeed. However, it is also my responsibility to drop students from the course when they are not making satisfactory progress. Here are the reasons I might drop you from the course:

* You don't come to class on the first day or for the first few days (unless you have made advance arrangements with me).
* You don't turn in any assignments for two consecutive weeks before the drop date (without prior arrangement).

I will consider exceptions to these policies on a case by case basis. Here’s the main thing: if you’re experiencing challenges that make it difficult for you to comply with these policies, please let me know immediately so we can work out a plan. I’m here to help you succeed!

Deadlines:

Census Date: 08/21

Fee reversal/refund – 08/18

Add or drop to avoid W (in person) – 08/25

Add or drop to avoid W (on Self-Service) – 8/27

Drop with a ‘W’ (to avoid a letter grade) – 10/6

Holidays

9/4 Labor Day—No Classes, Campus Closed

11/10 Veteran’s Day—No Classes, Campus Open

11/23 & 11/24 Thanksgiving—No Classes, Campus Closed

Class Outline/Calendar

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Week/Module | Primary Reading | Assignments |
| 8/8 | 1 | Introduction |  |
| 8/10 | 1 | Brad Dowden, “Claims, Issues, and Arguments” |
| 8/15 | 2 | Harry Frankfurt, “On Bullshit” |  |
| 8/17 | 2 | C Thi Nguyen, “Playfulness versus epistemic traps” |
| 8/22 | 3 | Al Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*, Sections I & II | Active Reading Assignment 1 due Friday @ 11:59 pm |
| 8/24 | 3 | Rene Descartes, *Meditations* I & II |
| 8/29 | 4 | Marcus William Hunt, “Reasons to Believe” |  |
| 8/31 | 4 | Robert Sloan Lee, “Non-Standard Arguments for God’s Existence” |
| 9/5 | 5 | William Rowe, "Is evil evidence against belief in God?" & Fyodor Dostoyevsky, excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov* |  |
| 9/7 | 5 | Daniel Howard-Snyder and Michael Bergmann, "Evil does not make atheism more reasonable" |
| 9/12 | 6 | Rene Descartes*, Meditation* VI | Active Reading Assignment 2 due Friday @ 11:59 pm |
| 9/14 | 6 | Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?” |
| 9/19 | 7 | John Searle, "Can Computers Think?" |  |
| 9/21 | 7 | John Searle, "Can Computers Think" |
| 9/26 | 8 | David Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Consciousness" |  |
| 9/28 | 8 | Galen Strawson, “The impossibility of ultimate responsibility?” |
| 10/3 | 9 | Peter van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will” | Paper 1 due Friday @ 11:59 pm |
| 10/5 | 9 | Writing Workshop |
| 10/10 | 10 | Susan Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility” |  |
| 10/12 | 10 | George Berkeley, *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* |
| 10/17 | 11 | Nick Bostrom, “The Simulation Argument” | Active Reading Assignment 3 due Friday @ 11:59 pm |
| 10/19 | 11 | Alyssa Ney, “Metaphysics of Race” |
| 10/24 | 12 | Alyssa Ney, “Metaphysics of Race” |  |
| 10/26 | 12 | Linda Martin Alcoff, “Epistemologies of ignorance: three types” |
| 10/31 | 13 | Kristie Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing” | Active Reading Assignment 4 due Friday @ 11:59 pm |
| 11/2 | 13 | Clare Chambers, excerpt from *Sex, Culture, Justice* |
| 11/7 | 14 | Clare Chambers, excerpt *from Sex, Culture, Justice* |  |
| 11/9 | 14 | Plato, *Phaedo* |
| 11/14 | 15 | Plato, *Phaedo* |  |
| 11/16 | 15 | Zhuangzi, “On Death” |
| 11/21 | 16 | Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, Book III | Active Reading Assignment 5 due Monday @ 11:59 pm |
| 11/23 | 16 | Thanksgiving—NO CLASS |
| 11/28 | 17 | Susan Wolf, “The Meanings of Lives,” Charles Baudelaire, “Be Drunk,” & Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Heaviest Weight” |  |
| 11/30 | 17 | Peer Review |
| 12/4-12/8 | 18 | Finals Week | Paper 2 due Wednesday @ 11:59 pm |

Assignments

*Attendance & Participation* *(20%)*

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. In order to succeed in this course, active attendance is necessary, and frequent absences will negatively impact your grade. You will be allowed to be absent from two class sessions without penalty. You will get much more out of the course by showing up prepared and bringing in your questions, comments, and criticisms as they occur to you while reading.

Attendance ≠ participation. Participation is class discussion. It is imperative to your success in this class that you show up to every class prepared to discuss the reading for that day. You will be evaluated on your attempt to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments we discuss. Although a full understanding of the readings is not expected, you should be able to demonstrate that you’ve made a substantial effort to understand them with prepared questions, comments, or criticisms. The aim of participation is to hone your ability to analyze and synthesize philosophical ideas and arguments.

Your participation grade will be based in part on your compliance with these guidelines:

1. Participate in discussions with both the whole class and in small groups. You will frequently be asked to evaluate arguments and provide objections and arguments of your own with others. Philosophy is best done in conversation with others, so a significant part of your participation grade will be your willingness to contribute to group discussions. This participation can take many forms: posing a question, answering a question, providing a counterexample to a claim, etc.
2. Ideally, your questions and comments will be textually substantiated. In other words, try to make reference to the text we read for that day when you make comments or ask questions.
3. Do not engage in disrespectful behavior or make disrespectful comments. Disagreements of some kind are expected, and in some cases encouraged, provided they are respectful and substantive. If you wish to respond to a claim made by another student, it is expected that you will critically engage with their claim and respond using the philosophical tools developed throughout the class. Disagreements can be fruitful and help us better understand our own positions, but only if all parties involved are respectful.

*Active Reading Assignments (25%)*

Active reading assignments will take the form of a prompt asking you to apply a specific philosophical skill (e.g., summarizing an argument, using textual support, identifying and interpreting a claim, offering an objection, etc.) to one of the assigned readings. The purpose of these assignments is to help you develop the reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing skills you will need to recognize and respond to arguments for your midterm and final paper.

There will be five active reading assignments throughout the semester. Each is worth 5% of your final grade and should be between 350 and 500 words. These assignments will be assessed based on completion and engagement with the course material. You are not expected to get everything correct in these reading responses; you will be assessed primarily on whether it is clear to me that you critically engaged with the text and took the time to develop some thoughts about it.

*Papers (55%)*

You will be required to write two papers throughout the semester. These are expected to be between 1000 and 1500 words. These papers have two aims: 1) to demonstrate that you understand the course content, and 2) to allow you to develop and defend a position of your own. You can, for example, write a paper in which you set out a position from one of the papers we’ve read in the course, and then show why you agree (or disagree) with the author’s argument. You might also choose to present two contrasting views we have covered and take a position on which you think is stronger. These assignments are intended to require close reading of courses texts, as well as to enhance your skills in argument analysis and written communication.

The first paper will be due mid-semester and is worth 15% of your final grade. For this first paper, you’ll also be required to submit an outline for an additional 5%. The second paper will be due during finals week and is worth 30% of your final grade. For the second paper, you will be required to submit a draft for peer review one week before the due date. The draft is worth 5% of your final grade.

Grading Scale Grading/Evaluation:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment Category | Percent of Final Grade |
| Active Reading Assignments | 25% |
| Paper 1 Outline | 5% |
| Paper 1 | 15% |
| Paper 2 Draft (for peer review) | 5% |
| Paper 2 | 30% |
| Attendance & Participation | 20% |
| Total | 100% |

Make Up & Late Work

I want you to be successful in this class. The best way to do that is to meet all deadlines and submit all your work. That said, I understand that life may sometimes stand in the way of completing your assignments. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, please get in touch with me whatever the situation might be. In general, all tests and assignments are allowed to be made up, and points will not be deducted in cases of emergency. Typically, if you miss an assignment, I will reach out to help you make a plan for making up the work and staying on track.

Extra Credit

While there are no opportunities for extra credit in this class, there are many opportunities for you to succeed without it. Reach out to me early and often so that we can work together to ensure your success.

Class Norms

Be respectful of your classmates; take your education seriously; and refrain from doing anything that creates obstacles for others in the class to do the same. I want ALL my students to enjoy the class, so please play your part in facilitating a safe and supportive classroom environment. Critical thinking often leads to discussions about controversial subjects, and you will likely disagree with your classmates at times. Friendly debate is encouraged, but personal attacks on your classmates’ views are not. Philosophers think of disagreements as opportunities to grow!

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

A disability does not define a person; it only defines a way that a person's brain or body works. PLEASE don't be embarrassed to take advantage of these services if you qualify (and don't be embarrassed to see if you qualify!) Your success is important to me, so I intend to meet you where you are, and I am happy to accommodate your needs.

Reedley College is committed to creating accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. To obtain academic adjustments or auxiliary aids, students must be registered with the DSP&S office on campus. DSP&S can be reached at 559-494-3032 and is located in the DSP&S Building. All information is kept confidential. If you are already registered with the DSP&S office, please provide your Notice of Accommodation form to me as soon as possible, preferably during the first two weeks of class.

If your accommodation includes taking the tests in the DSP&S office, it is your responsibility to make an appointment to take the test on or before the day and time of the in-class test and to inform me of the appointment.

Please contact me as soon as possible if you have any questions.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

Students at Reedley College are entitled to the best education that the college can make available to them, and they, their instructors, and their fellow students share the responsibility to ensure that this education is honestly attained. Because cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities erode the integrity of the college, each student is expected to exert an entirely honest effort in all academic endeavors. Academic dishonesty in any form is a very serious offense and will incur serious consequences.

That said, students face a lot of pressures while in school. Sometimes, when time is short, you might feel tempted to take a shortcut and cheat or copy someone else’s work. It is far better to simply reach out to me for help. I enjoy working with students, and I understand that sometimes situations in your life prevent you from completing an assignment as you would like, that you run out of time, or make mistakes. It is better to be late on an assignment than to be dishonest on one. Contact me, so I can help you! If you do make a mistake, I will reach out to you, but I must follow the disciplinary procedures listed below.

**Cheating**

Cheating is the act or attempted act of taking an examination or performing an assigned, evaluated task in a fraudulent or deceptive manner, such as having improper access to answers, in an attempt to gain an unearned academic advantage. Cheating may include, but is not limited to, copying from another’s work, supplying one’s work to another, giving or receiving copies of examinations without an instructor’s permission, using or displaying notes or devices inappropriate to the conditions of the examination, allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent the student, or failing to disclose research results completely.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating and is the use of another’s words or ideas without identifying them as such or giving credit to the source. Plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, failing to provide complete citations and references for all work that draws on the ideas, words, or work of others, failing to identify the contributors to work done in collaboration, submitting duplicate work to be evaluated in different courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors involved, or encouraging, permitting, or assisting another to do any act that could subject him or her to discipline. Incidents of cheating and plagiarism may result in a variety of sanctions and penalties that may range from a failing grade on the particular examination, paper, project, or assignment in question to a failing grade in the course, at the discretion of the instructor and depending on the severity and frequency of the incidents.

Support Services

Reedley College has many resources available to help students through their educational journey.  This is a partial list of the more popular resources.  Refer to the Online Information Center or Counseling and Advising if you do not find what you need here.

**I don't know what I am looking for!**

*Online Information Center*

The Online Information Center provides a live chat to help guide you to the information you need.   Check hours available on the webpage.

**How do I get help with basic needs like food and housing?**

[*Tiger Pantry*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/campus-life/student-activities/tiger-pantry.html)

The Tiger Pantry offers non-perishable food items, personal toiletries, fresh produce and vegetables, and school supplies. This is made possible by donations and a collaboration with the Community Food Bank. It is available to all currently enrolled Reedley College students.

559.638.0300 x3105 (Student Activities Office)

*Homelessness Liaison*

The Homeless Liaison can help you get connected to a support program on campus and provide information about the Reedley College dorms. The liaison will also help you get connected to Fresno County Resources to find local homeless shelters.

[Aaren.Cobb@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:Aaren.Cobb@reedleycollege.edu) ~   phone 559.638.0340  ~  text 559.419.0256

**How do I pay for college?**

[Financial Aid](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/index.html)

Provides students information to secure the financial resources to pay for their education.

[reedley.financialaid@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:reedley.financialaid@reedleycollege.edu)  ~   559.638.0312

[Scholarships](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/scholarships/index.html)

This Reedley College financial resource provided by local businesses, community groups, alumni, and a variety of private sources.  Applications are generally due early Spring semester; check website for specific due dates.

559.638.0312

[*Career Center*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/career--employment-center.html)

The Career Center offers career and employment services, including help finding a job or internship.

[cec@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:cec@reedleycollege.edu)  ~   559.637.2543

*Student Support Programs & Centers*

There are a number of programs that can help you pay for college, connect to campus, and plan your studies. [EOPS](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/extended-opportunity-programs-and-services-eops/index.html) and [CalWORKs](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/calworks.html) are just two of the many Student Support Programs at Reedley College.  There are many programs available for students in a variety of areas and interests.  Students are encouraged to talk to their counselors about programs that might be appropriate for them.  Schedule time with a counselor for further information. Many of these programs are listed on the [Student Services page](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/index.html).

[Counseling and Advising](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/counseling/index.html) ~  [counseling@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:counseling@reedleycollege.edu)  ~  559.638.0337

**How do I get healthcare and mental health assistance?**

[*Health Services*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/campus-life/health-services/index.html)

Health Services is a nurse-run clinic available to currently enrolled students. The College Nurse Practitioner provides advanced nursing assessment and treatment for acute illnesses and injuries, preventative screening services, health education, and medical referrals to local health care providers.

559.638.0328

[Psychological Services](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/campus-life/health-services/psychological-services.html)

Psychological services is a program designed to meet mental health needs of the college community in Reedley. These services are available at no charge to students and assist in the promotion of healthy emotion and psychological responses. Psychological services include 4-6 confidential counseling sessions for college students. Care is provided by a clinical psychologist and supervised graduate interns.

559.638.0328

**How do I get help with technology?**

*Canvas Help*

Click on the icon at the bottom of the global navigation bar on the far left side of this window (pictured) to access links to Canvas Guides.

*Student Help Desk*

Ask questions about logging in to Canvas, email, WebAdvisor, or other local systems.

559.499.6070

*Canvas Student Orientation*

If you feel like you need to learn more about how to use Canvas, we have a self-enroll, self-paced Canvas Student Orientation course that is completely online for students to take within Canvas. Click the [self-enroll link](https://scccd.instructure.com/enroll/K6DWKL) if you would like to check it out

**Where can I get help being successful in my classes?**

[Academic Support Centers (Tutoring Services)](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/academics/tutoring-services/index.html)

Visit these locations to get connected to tutors.

* [Learning Center -- Tutorial (all subjects)](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/academics/tutoring-services/learning-center.html)
* [Math Center](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/academics/tutoring-services/math-center.html)
* [Reading & Writing Center](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/academics/tutoring-services/reading-and-writing-center/index.html)

[*Disabled Students Program & Services (DSP&S)*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/disabled-student-programs-and-services/index.html)

DSP&S provides services and accommodations that assist students with documented disabilities to reach their maximum potential while achieving their educational goals.

[DSPS@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:DSPS@reedleycollege.edu) ~   559.638.0332

**How do I stay on track?**

[*Counseling and Advising*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/counseling/index.html)

Counselors are available to help you with academic planning to help you stay on track and assist you with connecting to support resources that provide additional support based on your individual needs.

 Visit the [Academic Counseling and Advising](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/counseling/index.html) page to set up an appointment to meet with a Pathway Counselor.     
   
Academic Counseling is also available in all of our Student Support Programs.  Visit the individual program for more information.

559.638.0337

*Student Support Programs & Centers*

There are a number of programs that can help you pay for college, connect to campus, and plan your studies. [EOPS](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/extended-opportunity-programs-and-services-eops/index.html) and [CalWORKs](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/calworks.html) are just two of the many Student Support Programs at Reedley College.  There are many programs available for students in a variety of areas and interests.  Students are encouraged to talk to their counselors about programs that might be appropriate for them.  Schedule time with a counselor for further information. Many of these programs are listed on the [Student Services page](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/index.html).

[*Counseling and Advising*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/counseling/index.html)*~*  [counseling@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:counseling@reedleycollege.edu)  ~  559.638.0337

[*Admissions and Records*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/admissions-aid/admissions/index.html)

Admissions and records can help you add, drop, and register for your classes.

[admissions@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:admissions@reedleycollege.edu) ~  559.638.0323

[*Transfer Center*](https://www.reedleycollege.edu/student-services/counseling/transfer-services.html)

The Reedley College Transfer Center is designed to assist students explore, prepare and succeed in their transfer plans. We provide a variety of resources and services to help students transfer from Reedley College to other colleges and universities for completion of their educational goals.

[transfercenter@reedleycollege.edu](mailto:transfercenter@reedleycollege.edu)  ~   559.638.0300 ext. 3234