

Syllabus
PHIL 3011 (3 Cr.)
Philosophy of Philosophy
Spring 2023

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips
Office: 108F General Classrooms
Student Hours: M,W: 2:00p-3:00p, T,R: 11:30a-1:00p & also by appointment.

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Class Meets:
MWF: 3:00-3:50p in SC 226

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What even is philosophy? Philosophers tend to be particularly reflective to the point that even the very boundaries, methods, and aims of the discipline itself are up for debate. In this course, we will explore different conceptions of the aims and methods of, as well as the demarcation between, philosophy and other disciplines. Utilizing a mix of classical and contemporary texts on and about philosophy itself, we will address questions including: what is the nature of philosophy? What are the aims of philosophy? What are the proper methods and tools for exploring philosophical issues? Is philosophy valuable? If so, from what does philosophy derive its value?

Course Learning Outcomes:

- **Critical Thinking:** The successful student will begin to be able to differentiate between good and bad reasons for holding philosophical beliefs and will be able to seek out and identify the assumptions that lie at the basis of philosophical positions.
- **Inquiry and Analysis:** The successful student will begin to be able to break complex philosophical problems into their components, and will be able to identify the consequences and implications of philosophical positions.
- **Writing:** The successful student will be able to express some abstract and complex philosophical ideas in clear, precise, and logical prose.
- **Reading Comprehension:** The successful student will be able to analyze and interpret abstract and difficult philosophical writing.

TEXTS:

An Introduction to Metaphilosophy. Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood (2013) ISBN:978-0-521-17598-2 (**IM**)

Doing Philosophy: How Philosophers Think. Williamson (2018) ISBN: 978-0-19-882251-6 (**DP**)

What is Philosophy For? Midgley (2018) ISBN: 978-1-350-05107-2 (**WPF**)

Philosophy as a Way of Life. Hadot (1995) ISBN: 978-0-631-18033-3 (**PWOL**)

All other readings will be made available through Canvas.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This list of readings is tentative. Specific reading assignments will be given on a day-to-day basis.

Week 1: Introduction: Virtues, Arguments, Dialogue, and Metaphilosophy

King: from *The Excellent Mind* (Canvas)

Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 2, "What is Philosophy?" (IM: 17-44)

Rescher: from *Metaphilosophy* (Canvas)

[Recommended] Fumerton and Jeske: "Introduction: Philosophical Analysis, Argument, and the relevance of Thought Experiments" (Canvas)

Weeks 2 – 5: Williamson's Philosophy as a Non-Natural Science

Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 3, "Philosophy Science and the Humanities" (IM: 45-69)

Williamson: Chapters 1-3 (DP: 1-34)

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Williamson: Chapters 4-6 (DP: 35-81)
Williamson: Chapters 6-9 (DP: 82-126)
Williamson: Chapters 10-11 (DP: 127-141)
Sauer: “The End of History” (Canvas)
Chalmers: “Why Isn’t there More Progress in Philosophy?” (Canvas)
Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 4, “The Data of Philosophical Arguments” (IM: 70-104)

Weeks 6 – 9: Midgley’s Anti-Scientism

Midgley: Chapters 1-4, 8 (WPF: 1-30, 47-55)
Midgley: Chapters 12-14 (WPF: 71-95)
[Mid-Term Paper and Self-Reflection]
Midgley: Chapters 15-17 (WPF: 99-126)
Midgley: Chapters 20-Conclusion (WPF: 151-208)
Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 6, “Philosophy and the Pursuit of Truth” (IM: 136-161)

Weeks 10 – 14: Hadot’s Philosophy as a Way of Life

Smith: from *The Philosopher* (Canvas)
Hadot: Part I – Method (PWOL: 47-78)
Hadot: Part II – Spiritual Exercises (PWOL: 79-144)
Hadot: Part III – Figures (PWOL: 148-213)
Hadot: from Part IV – Themes (PWOL: 251-276)
Cooper: from *Pursuits of Wisdom* (Canvas)
Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 7, “What is Good Philosophy?” (IM: 162-187)
Overgaard, Gilbert & Burwood: Chapter 8, “What Good is Philosophy?” (IM: 188-218)

[Final Paper due April 14th]

[Final Portfolio (including final reflection) due April 21st]

ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION:

“Extrinsic motivation, which includes a desire to get better grades, is not only different from, but often undermines, intrinsic motivation, a desire to learn for its own sake” – Alfie Kohn (1999), *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A’s, praise, and other bribes*. Rev. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Let’s Talk Motivation: In recent years I have become increasingly unhappy with grades as a measure of anything at all. I often tell my students that it’s probably easy to get an A in my class – you can relatively easily “hack” my grading system and figure out the “formula” for writing a paper for me. Once you figure it out, getting an A on papers in my classes is easy. But I don’t want you to get an A by “hacking the system.” I want you to push yourself to learn new things because you found something you’re excited about and wanted to try to go beyond what’s comfortable and familiar. I’ve long thought that an A- or a B+ that was the result of taking risks was worth more than a safe, but well-written A paper.

In short, grading is not a good measure of learning, and the focus on grades distracts from the real goal of education. If you’re aiming for a specific grade, you’re not aiming to get the most out of your educational opportunities.

Evaluation: Here’s what we will do. I will ask you to fill out a brief survey to help us both better understand where your strengths are and where you can improve with regard to various intellectual virtues.

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I will then ask you to write a self-evaluation considering the following questions:

- (a) What are your reasons for taking this class?
- (b) What do you hope to get out of this class?
- (c) Where and how do you think you can improve on your academic work?
- (d) What do you think I hope you'll take away from the class?
- (e) Which of the listed virtues do you consider to be the most important? Why?
- (f) On which of them do you want to focus this semester?

You and I will meet one-on-one at the start of the semester to establish concrete goals for the class.

I will ask you to do a mid-semester check-in reflection paper just after your mid-term paper. You'll be tasked with a number of assignments throughout the semester aimed at keeping you writing, thinking, and talking about the material.

We will meet up again at the end of the semester to discuss what progress have you made with regard to our goals. Before we meet, however, I will ask you to organize a portfolio including all of your work from the course of the semester, and to both re-take the virtues survey and write a final reflection.

The idea is that we will **collaboratively** come to a determination about what sort of progress you've made, where you think you can continue to improve (and how to best do so). As such, I will not provide you with numerical or letter grades on individual assignments. I will provide my standard level of *qualitative* feedback on your work (discursive comments regarding clarity, precision, critical engagement, etc.), but the gradebook will only note whether you turned the assignment in. You may revise and resubmit any assignment you wish in light of my comments at any point.

You are responsible for working with me to determine your final grade in this class. We will come to an agreement based on formal self-assessments, the collected feedback you received from me over the course of the semester, and a final discussion. *I reserve the right to adjust the final grade, but I will not do so without telling you first.*

Assignments:

- **Introductory Self-Reflection Paper** (Due January 11th).
- **Introductory Goal-Setting Meeting.** Sign up for a 15 minute meeting (zoom or office) here where we will discuss your goals, motivations, etc.
- **Weekly Reflection Papers** (Due weekly). I expect that you will keep a somewhat informal log of ideas, questions, subjects of interest, connections, etc. that arise over the course of the semester. I would like to see something each week – whether it's a subject that was in the reading but did not quite make it into our discussion, something from class that led you down a rabbit hole, or whatever else – keep track of them. This should be more than just a bullet-list, but doesn't need to be formal. It's really just to see what you're thinking over the course of the term.
- **Formal Reflections on Each Book** (Due as we finish a text). Each of the three monographs we are reading (Williamson, Midgley, and Hadot) offers a unique perspective on what philosophy is and how it is done. I would like you to write a short, careful paper explaining what philosophy is according to each author and their reasons for that view, as well as any objections you may have to that understanding of philosophy.
- **Midterm paper** (Due February 21st).
- **Mid-point Reflection** (Due February 24th).

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- **Final Paper Proposal (Due March 10th)**. I would like to see a proposal of between ½ page and 1 page of your term paper. It can be rough, but I'd like to see an approximate thesis, and a direction for research – you don't need to have done the research yet, but find some contemporary work on your topic and give me a few pieces you intend to use for your paper. If you feel uncomfortable trying to find sources, or don't know where to look, I'm more than happy to help. We can address this in our introductory meeting, during our mid-semester meeting, and/or during student hours.
- **Final Paper (Due April 14th)**. Your term paper will be roughly 3000 words, and can discuss any topic in the *Philosophy* of education.
- **Portfolio (Due April 21st)**. The details of what should be included in this will appear on Canvas. Please keep track of *all* of your reflections/surveys/etc.
- **Final Meeting (During finals week)**. We will meet to discuss your progress toward your goals over the semester, and determine your final grade. I will post the Calendly link as we get closer. Make sure you (a) sign up early, and (b) attend the time you sign up for. *I will not allow rescheduling during finals week* (except for emergencies).
- **Participation**. Philosophy is best done in open, careful dialogue with one another. I know not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of their peers, but I want to encourage you to genuinely engage one another regarding the ideas in the class. There are a number of ways one can be an active participant in the course. Whether that is asking questions in class, organizing discussion boards, setting up study groups, visiting during student hours, or something else you come up with, I'd like to see you really engage with both the material and one another. I will track attendance over the course of the semester – it's incredibly difficult to participate in a dialogue when one is absent.

REQUIRED POLICY STATEMENTS:

Plagiarism or academic fraud. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter. Please familiarize yourself with Southern Utah University's *Student Handbook*, which you can find online at <https://www.suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP633Academic.pdf>. I will follow the regulations described in this document for dealing with cheating, plagiarism, etc. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism or academic fraud after reading through the student handbook, please do not hesitate to ask me for further clarification. That said, **I trust you.**

Disabilities: I warmly welcome any of you who have disabilities. Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations, or auxiliary aids must contact the Office for Students with Disabilities. The Office for Students with Disabilities determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of these services and aids. Reasonable and effective accommodations and services will be provided to students if requests are made in a timely manner, with appropriate documentation, in accordance with federal, state, and University guidelines. For Southern Utah University's full policy, see: <http://suu.edu/pub/policies/pdf/PP119Disability.pdf>.

SUU Pride Alliance: Pride Alliance is a network comprised of students, staff, and faculty dedicated to creating safe spaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer individuals and Allies (LGBTQA) on the campus of Southern Utah University (SUU). As an ally, please know that I am committed to seeing that everyone is afforded the dignity and respect they deserve regardless of their identity. <http://www.suu.edu/allies/>

Emergency Management: In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response

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Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://suu.edu/emergency>.

HEOA Compliance: The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is prohibited by law.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this syllabus, other than the grading, late assignments, makeup work, and attendance policies are subject to change with advance notice, as I deem appropriate.