

Syllabus
PHIL 100-0 (3 Cr.)
Introduction to Philosophy
Winter 2024

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips

Email: JPay

Class Meets:
M 5:30p-8:10p in TBA 01 (WHV Campus)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An introduction to philosophy through classical and contemporary readings in philosophy concerning justice, autonomy and the relation between happiness and the good life. Over the course of this semester we explore not what one ought to think, but *how* to think about fundamental problems in these areas and how to use our reasoned conclusions in service of the ultimate aim of living well. This course fulfills the *Humanities Knowledge Area* for the General Education Program.

Course Learning Outcomes (GE):

- Contextualize and think critically about texts, ideas, and genres in the humanities.
- Use and construct arguments.
- Reflect on personal growth with respect to imagination, empathy, or social and political agency using the methods of the humanities.
- Draw connections between course content and contexts outside of the classroom using the disciplinary tools of the humanities.

Skill and Intellectual Virtue-Based Outcomes:

- Curiosity: A disposition to wonder, ponder, and ask why. A desire to explore and understand.
- Carefulness: A disposition to notice and avoid intellectual pitfalls and mistakes. Striving for accuracy.
- Tenacity: A willingness to embrace intellectual challenge and struggle. Keep your eyes on the prize and don't give up.

I will evaluate your performance on these learning outcomes through contributions to our in-class dialogue, in-class assignments, weekly reading responses, and short papers.

TEXTS: I will make the material for the introductory section of this course available on the first day. Please make sure to bring your books to class each meeting so that we can discuss the texts and engage in close-reading projects. *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (ISBN: 978-0-872220-554-3) by Plato. Hackett (2000). *The Encheiridion* (ISBN: 978-0-915145-69-0) by Epictetus. Hackett (1983). *Happy Lives, Good Lives* (ISBN: 978-1-55481-100-7) by Jennifer Mulnix and M.J. Mulnix, Broadview Press (2015).

SOME GENERAL ADVICE: This course presupposes a willingness to work hard and think critically about some very difficult problems. Philosophy is hard, you'll see – there really is no shallow end to the pool here. Students who read reflectively and attend class regularly are more likely to remain interested in (and maybe even enjoy!) the material, benefit from the class discussions, and develop the philosophical skills and level of comprehension required to continually improve in their thinking. Some notes will be provided every week, but these, the lectures, and class discussion will very likely be hard to follow if you don't do the readings or if you miss previous classes and do not pursue any of the options available for getting caught up. Please get to know your peers and chat about these issues even when you're not in the class! I think you'll find that philosophy is best done through dialogue, so build a philosophical community!

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

This schedule is tentative and open to revision.

Week 1 (Jan 8): Introductions; What is philosophy?; Logic, reasoning, and intellectual virtue
King: *Why Good Thinking Matters*

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Russell: *The Value of Philosophy*
Phillips: *Logic Primer*

Week 2 (Jan 15): MLK day, No Class.

Week 3 (Jan 22): Logic, reasoning and intellectual virtue continued; Socrates' Trial
Plato: *Apology* (p. 20-42).

Week 4 (Jan 29): Socrates on the law, social contract, and justice; Socrates' death
Plato: *Crito* (p. 43-54)
Plato: from *Phaedo* (p. 55-58)

Week 5 (Feb 5): Stoicism
Epictetus: *The Encheiridion (the Handbook)* (p. 11-29)

Week 6 (Feb 12): Happy Lives, Good Lives I
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Introduction* (p. 1-12)
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Intuitions about Happiness* (p. 13-28)

Week 7 (Feb 19): Happy Lives, Good Lives II
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Happy Lives, Good Lives, and Moral Lives* (p. 29-57)

Week 8 (Feb 26): Spring Break, No Class.

Week 9 (March 4): Happiness as Pleasure I
Mulnix & Mulnix: *The Feel-Good Feature of Happiness* (p. 61-92)

Week 10 (March 11): Happiness as Pleasure II
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Taking Pleasure in Things and Feeling Joy* (p. 93-113)

Week 11 (March 18): Happiness as Satisfaction I
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Satisfied with What?* (p. 117-145)

Week 12 (March 25): Happiness as Satisfaction II
Mulnix & Mulnix: *It's All About Perspective* (p. 146-172)

Week 13 (Apr 1): Happiness as Eudaimonia I
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Is Ignorance Bliss?* (p. 175-196)

Week 14 (Apr 8): Happiness as Eudaimonia II
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Happiness, Moral Virtue, and the Purpose of Life* (p. 197-231)

Week 15 (Apr 15): Happiness as Eudaimonia III
Mulnix & Mulnix: *Finding Equanimity in the Face of Suffering* (p. 232-262)

Finals Week (Apr 22): Final Meeting – reflection, thoughts, etc.

ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION, POLICY:

Short Papers (25%) At roughly the mid-point of the semester and for the final meeting, you will need to write a relatively short, focused philosophy paper on an argument from the one of the texts that stood out to you. I will

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provide more specifics in class both about how to write philosophy papers generally and about the assignments themselves. The main thing I'm looking for, however, is a genuine engagement with the reasons the author provides and that you *add* to the conversation by way of critical engagement with the argument. This is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts on the topic at hand. The papers will be scaffolded throughout course so that you have time to work on them in class, receive feedback from me and your classmates, and have the opportunity to revise the papers as well. I would like to encourage you to work with the folks at the writing center as well.

Textual Analysis and Other In-Class Activities (25%) Philosophy is notoriously difficult to read and understand, so we will practice identifying and reconstructing arguments, identifying the "voice" in a passage, and stepping back and considering why we are reading and discussing the material. Since philosophy as a discipline is largely dialogical, it's important that we understand what folks are saying *before* we try to add to the conversation. These analyses will help us practice reading, interpreting, and understanding what philosophers are saying. We will have at least one exercise each week in class.

Weekly Reading Responses (50%) In addition to your papers and argument analyses, you need to keep up on the reading. To facilitate discussion and keep you on track, I want you to complete weekly critical summaries. Please complete the reading for the week (assigned each week and following the schedule on the syllabus) and write at least one page about the text including a critical discussion of the reading. I'd like you to *very* briefly summarize the main point of the reading, but it is not enough to merely summarize what you've read. The reflection must make some kind of critical contribution beyond just a summary. This can come in the form of questions about vocabulary, the argument(s) in the text, figures, particular passages, or points where you disagree with the arguments in the texts. I will collect them at end of each class and provide you with feedback the following week.

Classroom Conduct: The classroom constitutes a community of which we are each an important part. The very foundation of philosophy as a discipline is the ability to charitably listen, understand and represent the views of ourselves and others. Philosophy as a discipline requires careful dialogue. As such, respect for your fellow student, your instructor, and the course is of critical importance. We can, should, and will disagree with one another often, but this *MUST* be conducted with respect. Different contexts have different norms for how one might express respect. In philosophy, engaging critically with another's ideas is often a sign of respect – it indicates that the ideas are serious and worthy of consideration, even if we ultimately may not agree with them. It may take some getting used to, but we will identify concrete ways to think about how we can demonstrate respect for one another through our philosophical dialogue.

Attendance: I do not have a formal attendance policy, but philosophy is hard even if you come to class. You are responsible for information that I offer in lecture that is not in the readings. I understand that things may come up that are outside of your control, so please do not worry too much if you cannot make a class due to extenuating circumstances. Otherwise, please do your best to come to class and be present.

OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES & RESOURCES

University Policies In addition to the articulated course specific policies and expectation, students are responsible for understanding all applicable university guidelines, policies, and procedures. The [EMU Student Handbook](#) is the primary resource provided to students to ensure that they have access to all university policies, support resources, and student's rights and responsibilities. Changes may be made to the EMU Student Handbook whenever necessary, and shall be effective immediately, and/or as of the date on which a policy is formally adopted, and/or the date specified in the amendment. Electing not to access the link provided below does not absolve a student of responsibility. For questions about any university policy, procedure, practice, or resources, please contact the Office of the Ombuds: 248 Student Center, 734.487.0074, emu_ombuds@emich.edu, or visit the website at www.emich.edu/ombuds. [CLICK HERE to access the University Course Policies](#)