

**Syllabus**  
**PHIL 602-0 (4 Cr.)**  
**Teaching Seminar and Practicum**  
**Winter 2024**

Instructor: Dr. Kristopher G. Phillips  
Office: Pray Harrold 702-B  
Student Hours: T: 9:30-12:00 (Zoom), W: 9:30-12:00p (PH 702B) & also by appointment

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Class Meets:  
MW 12:30p-1:45p in Pray-Harrold 218

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course, we will consider the aims, scope, and purpose of a philosophical education in order to provide a theoretical grounding for our engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning within philosophy. The course will provide students with the tools necessary to become an effective learner-centered philosophy instructor, as well as practical experiences with curriculum design, learning assessment, and classroom instruction.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will become confident in their ability to, and will have the requisite preparation to one of the introductory philosophy courses at Eastern Michigan University (PHIL 100, PHIL 110, or PHIL 120).
- Students will become familiar with and will apply recent work in the scholarship of teaching and learning to their own classes.
- Students will demonstrate their familiarity with the scholarship of teaching and learning by producing a research paper in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Students will practice effective strategies for teaching philosophy at the college level including but not limited to: Reflective teaching journaling, a skills-approach, transparent alignment, backward design, and assessment.
- Students will read and analyze theories of effective teaching.
- Students will address arguments associated with teaching at the college level – including equity and accessibility.

**TEXTS:** There are three *required* books:

- Steven Cahn, *Professors as Teachers* (2022) ISBN: 978-1-6667-4637-2 **(PT)**
- Kevin Gannon, *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto* (2020) ISBN: 978-1-9491-9951-2 **(RH)**
- Jason Baehr, *Deep in Thought: A Practical Guide to Teaching for Intellectual Virtues* (2021) ISBN: 978-1-6825-3670-4 **(IV)**

All additional *required* texts will be provided on Canvas.

I would also like to *recommend*:

- Susan Ambrose, et al.'s *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (2010) ISBN: 978-0-470-48410-4

**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. We will work out just what 'respect' looks like together in class, but as a necessary condition is that you arrive to each class having read the assigned material carefully and that you're ready to share your thoughts about the reading with all of us. I will, of course have things to say, but this will be a dialogue, not a monologue.

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**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS:**

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

**Week 1** **Introduction & Grading**

Schneider & Hutt: "Making the Grade: a History of the A-F Marking Scheme" (Canvas)

Alfie Kohn: "The Case Against Grades" (Canvas)

Jesse Stommel: "How to Ungrade" (Canvas)

Cahn: Chapter 5, "Grading" (PT 25-29)

**Weeks 2-5** **What is Philosophy (Education)?**

Sockett: *from Knowledge and Virtue in Teaching and Learning*, "The Epistemological Presence in Teaching and Learning" (Canvas)

Plato: *from Theaetetus* (Canvas)

hooks: *from Teaching to Transgress*, "Introduction" (Canvas)

Dotson: "How is this Paper Philosophy?" (Canvas)

Jones, Talukdar, & Goering: "Can Precollege Philosophy Help Academic Philosophy's Diversity Problem?" (Canvas)

**Weeks 6-12** **Pedagogy**

Cahn: **PT**, 1-65

Gannon: **RH**, 1-152

Koolage: "Flatten That Hierarchy: Everyone Wins When We All Teach (and Learn) Together" (Canvas)

King: *from The Excellent Mind*, "Why Good Thinking Matters" (Canvas)

Battaly: "Responsibilist Virtues in Reliabilist Classrooms" (Canvas)

Baehr: **IV**, 1-194

Croce & D. Pritchard: "Education as the Social Cultivation of Virtue" (Canvas)

Lipman, Sharp, Oscanyan: *from Philosophy in the Classroom*, "Guiding a Philosophical Discussion" (Canvas)

Chetty: "Racism as 'Reasonableness': Philosophy for Children and the Gated Community of Inquiry" (Canvas)

Finley: "From Virtue Argumentation to Virtue Dialogue Theory" (Canvas)

**Weeks 13-15** **Assessment**

Possin: "A Field-Guide to Critical Thinking Assessment" (Canvas)

M. Pritchard: *from Reasonable Children*, "What is Critical Thinking" (Canvas)

Kotzee: "Problems of Assessment in Educating for Intellectual Virtue" (Canvas)

Phillips: "Dialogue, Virtue, and Assessment: Teaching for More than Technical Proficiency" (Canvas)

**ASSIGNMENTS, EVALUATION, POLICY:**

"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

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opportunities. My general feeling of dissatisfaction with grades has only been sharpened by my position as an instructor in a graduate course. After all, the expectation for graduate-level work is that one *never* fall below the A-range on their transcript. A mark in the “B” range indicates that significant improvement is required in order to produce work suitable for admission to a philosophy Ph.D. program.

**Evaluation:** Here’s what we will do. In the first week, I’ll offer you a choice between approaches. If you would prefer a traditional grading scale, we can do that. Otherwise, we will pursue an “ungrading” paradigm. We will decide as a class and pursue that for everyone. I’ll now discuss what is involved in each.

*Traditional grading paradigm*

The grade of “A” indicates that the quality of work is very good to excellent. The work produced is well-written, carefully argued, thoroughly researched, and possesses a clear, novel thesis that adds to the scholarly discussion. The quality of work is what is expected of Ph.D. level students.

The grade of “A-” indicates that the quality of work is good, but that improvement is necessary, for example, if the work were to be suitable for admission to a Ph.D. program in philosophy.

The grade of “B” indicates that the quality of work is mediocre to fair, and that significant improvement would be required if this work were to be, for example, suitable for admission to a Ph.D. program in philosophy.

The grade of “C” indicates that the quality of work is distinctly below what is expected of a graduate student.

A final score of less than 70% is failing (“F”) for graduate students.

*Ungrading Paradigm*

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. 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 exam.

We will meet up again at the end of the semester to discuss what progress have you made with regard to our goals.

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 are responsible for working with me to determine your final grade in this class (as by policy I have to submit a grade for your transcript). 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.*

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**A Preliminary List of Assignments**

1. Final paper
2. Introductory class observations and reflections (x3)
3. Participation
4. “APA Syllabus Showcase” project
5. Syllabus development project
6. Short teaching presentation
7. Long teaching presentation
8. Evaluation tools development project
9. Statement of Teaching Philosophy

**Notes on Assignments**

1. *Final Paper*

Your final paper should be intended to demonstrate your ability to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning at the professional level. It should address any topic related to this course and should both engage with extant literature on the teaching of philosophy while making a contribution to the ongoing scholarly discussion (i.e. it should go beyond a mere lit-review). Your paper should be ~3000 words (10-12 pages) and suitable for submission to a scholarly conference.

We will work on this project in a scaffolded way throughout the semester by having shorter assignments that build up to the final product including: a paper proposal including a tentative thesis, an annotated source list, an outline of the paper, a draft, and a final paper. We will also make time for in-class workshopping.

2. *Introductory class observations and reflections*

Over the course of the semester, you should visit and *observe* at least three (3) class sessions of an introductory course (100, 110, or 120) as taught by a faculty member. Your job is to observe the class only; you are not to contribute to the course, offer feedback to the professor, or do work for the faculty member, merely to observe. Make sure to note the level at which the content is presented, the professor’s engagement with the students, their demeanor in the classroom, and structure of the lesson, etc. Make sure to take notes on the professor’s teaching style. After you observe each session, I’d like you to write a response identifying strengths of the professor’s teaching and considering the extent to which you could adopt any/all of those features. Also note any things you might do differently and explain why you’d take a different approach (these may be grounded in some of the pedagogy lit we are reading or in reasons derived from your own style). I expect careful engagement with your experience observing the class. In your reflection please ensure you state who was teaching, what they were teaching, and the date of your visit.

3. *Participation*

This course is only going to work if we are all present and prepared to discuss the material. While I have a lot of thoughts about everything having to do with teaching, this is not a course in which I intend to “hold court” and tell you about teaching. Instead, it’s a course where we are going to work together to identify concrete ways that we can all become more effective teachers. I expect everyone to be an active participant in the discussions we have each class. Plan to read the material ahead of class meetings and come prepared with questions, comments, criticisms, or general reflections in order to facilitate a fruitful dialogue.

4. *APA Syllabus Showcase Project*

The Blog of the American Philosophical Association has a sub-section called the “Syllabus Showcase.” In this series, faculty from all over share one of their syllabi and discuss the purpose of various assignments, common sticking points, tips and so on. The idea is to help fellow philosophy teachers improve their courses by providing a model for future courses. You can find the series here:

<https://blog.apaonline.org/category/syllabus-showcase/>

I would like you to read three (3) entries for courses that stand out to you and write a short reflection paper outlining what you’ve taken away from the entries. Specifically, I want to see the following: what assignments do you want to adopt/adapt and build into your syllabus and why? What policies or addenda

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stood out to you as useful? How did the authors make their syllabi accessible (inaccessible) and how can you emulate or fix those features? Also, please make sure to provide me with a link to each entry.

5. *Syllabus development project*

The purpose of this assignment is to help you prepare to teach an introductory course, either at EMU or another institution, as primary instructor. We will spend some time in class discussing effective syllabus construction, the departmental expectations for a syllabus in the Department of History and Philosophy at EMU, and will identify which of the introductory courses for which you'd like to design a syllabus. I'll then ask you to produce a syllabus as well as an accompanying "syllabus showcase" entry explaining some of your pedagogical decisions.

6. *Short teaching presentation*

You will present, in front of the class, a five (5) minute expository lecture on any topic in philosophy suitable for an introductory course. You will receive feedback on your presentation *style* (NOT content) from me and your peers. Your presentation must remain within five minutes but should clearly articulate a philosophical concept, argument, or theme. You may, if you would like, try again a second time after receiving feedback, but you are not required to do so.

7. *Long teaching presentation*

After having shared your short presentation before class, you will be asked to give a longer presentation (not more than 15 minutes) on the same topic as short presentation. You should take into consideration the feedback you received on your short presentation as well as go into greater depth. You will receive feedback from your peers and me *primarily* on the presentation, but *secondarily* on the content of the presentation this time. As with the short presentation, you are welcome to present a second time taking into account the feedback you received if you would like.

8. *Evaluation tools development project*

You will produce one writing assignment for your class. This may be a paper assignment, an exam (as long as it involves a substantial written component), or otherwise. You will be evaluated on the practicality of the use of this assignment in your class – keep in mind that you will also have to provide feedback on student work – so even if it seems possible for a student to complete the assignment, you will likely have 20-30 of these which you will have to read/provide feedback.

9. *Statement of teaching philosophy*

A crucial part of applying for jobs in academic philosophy is the development of a statement of teaching philosophy. This document should represent your philosophical and pedagogical commitments, as well as indicating the ways in which your approach to teaching is "evidence-based" (i.e. your teaching practices are grounded in and informed by scholarly work on effective teaching). This statement should demonstrate what you have learned in this class and show concrete ways in which you can or intend to apply the lessons to your teaching practices.

### **A Note on AI, Large-Language Models, and Their Use**

Using AI tools appropriately is a big part of our cultural development at this point in our history. This class is focused on building your philosophical skills, especially interpreting, designing, and critiquing arguments and theories. AIs can sort of do some of these things, but there are myriad reasons *not* to employ them in place of doing the work yourself. One such reason is that allowing an AI to do any part of the coursework for you is not just cheating yourself out of the opportunity to get better at philosophy (that is, thinking, reading, writing, and being a person), it is failing to do what the assignment is asking you to do – display and develop *your* philosophical abilities. If there is good reason to believe an AI did the work for you, any of the following may well occur: you will be asked to meet to discuss the work, you will be asked to redo the work without the help of generative AI, you will receive a 0 for the assignment, or you will fail the class. In class we will discuss further reasons to refrain from having AI do the work *for* you, as well as ways that it *can* appropriately be employed.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES & RESOURCES**

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**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](mailto:emu_ombuds@emich.edu), or visit the website at [www.emich.edu/ombuds](http://www.emich.edu/ombuds). [CLICK HERE to access the University Course Policies](#)

**Academic Dishonesty** Academic dishonesty of any kind is expressly prohibited. Engaging in academic dishonesty of any kind will result in failure of the course, a referral to the [Office of Wellness and Community Responsibility](#) for disciplinary action, and a deeply uncomfortable final conversation at the end of the term. You're already paying an awful lot of money to take this class, and I am committed to helping you develop the philosophical, intellectual, and personal skills to the best of your ability. Engaging in any form of cheating really cuts against the whole purpose of the whole education thing.

I don't like doing this, and let me be clear – I trust you. I am not going to look to bust you, and I do not see our professional relationship as adversarial. If you're struggling and you don't know what to do, how to cite sources, etc. **please come talk to me.**

**Accommodations** 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 Disability Resource Center (DRC). The [DRC](#) works collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to create an accessible, sustainable, and inclusive educational environment.

**Recording Class** I will not record class meetings and I ask that you also please refrain from recording the class meetings without prior permission both from me and from your classmates.

**University Library** Research support is available to all students, 24/7. This includes getting started with research, identifying sources to search, developing search strategies, evaluating resources, and more. See <https://www.emich.edu/library/help/ask.php> for all of the ways in which you can get help with research. Some University Library services have changed, and may continue to change, in response to the pandemic. Please check for current information at <https://www.emich.edu/library/news/covid.php>

**University Writing Center** The [University Writing Center](#) (UWC) offers writing support to all undergraduate and graduate students. In doing so, we value the diversity of our campus and honor all students and the languages they bring with them to the university.

**Holman Success Center** Provides [Academic Support](#) through a variety of virtual and in-person services.

**Title IX** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex under any education program or activity receiving federal financial aid. Sexual assault and sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX. [What you need to know about Title IX](#)

**Student and Exchange Visitor Statement** The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requires F and J students to report numerous items to the [Office of International Students & Scholars](#) (OISS)

**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.