

Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 101 section 008)
Fall 2025

Course Number: 50977

Course meeting time/location: Tues/Thurs 9:15am – 10:30am in Powdermaker Hall 152

Instructor: Professor Ryan O'Loughlin (email: roloughlin@qc.cuny.edu)

Drop-in hours: Tues 1:00 – 2:00pm

Office Location: Powdermaker Hall 350V

Course Description and Objectives: Philosophy is often concerned with *The BIG Questions*. In this course we examine several such big questions, e.g., what does it mean to know something? How do we decide what is the right thing to do? And are we (really) free? We will draw from thinkers and movements both inside and outside of the traditional western canon.

By the end of this course, students will be able to¹:

- ❖ Explain some key questions that have been asked in the history of philosophy
- ❖ Synthesize information argued in a philosophical paper, determine its conclusion, and evaluate the support offered for the conclusion
- ❖ Describe and apply logical concepts such as validity and soundness
- ❖ Construct counterexamples to show potential weaknesses of an argument
- ❖ Entertain positions one does not hold and treat them seriously and charitably

Reading Materials for Course:

All readings will be posted online – you don't need to buy any books for this course.

However, I do ask that you bring with you to class a notebook and pen/pencil (yep, very old school). Research has shown that students learn better and retain more information when they take notes using a pen rather than by typing (or not taking notes at all). If you have strong evidence to the contrary, please let me know.

Basis for Grading:

Quizzes (7 quizzes @ 15 pts each).....	105 points
In-class assignments (8 assignments @ 10 pts each).....	80 points
Meet with Professor.....	20 points
Final Exam.....	100 points
	Total: 305 points

¹ This course fulfills Pathways Requirement *Individual and Society* (IS) learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

Comprehension Quizzes

There will be quizzes roughly every other Thursday. Quizzes are intended to gauge how well you're understanding the key concepts and ideas covered in class. There will be a mixture of multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions.

In-class Assignments

Writing, thinking, and discussing are core components of doing philosophy. To hone these skills and to practice using and thinking about new concepts in class, you will be asked to complete a variety of in-class assignments. These range from group problem solving to evaluating a case study to writing a short reflection or argument.

Note on participation and attendance

Participation is strongly encouraged – the best learning takes place when you have skin in the game, when you risk failure, and when you acknowledge what you don't know by asking questions. Moreover, we all will benefit from each of you offering your ideas and perspectives! While I do not formally take attendance*, ***you will need to attend if you want to take the comprehension quizzes and complete in-class assignments.*** Moreover, in my past teaching I have observed a strong positive correlation between student attendance and performance. It's simple: if you want a good grade, you need to show up.

*If you have to miss class for a family or medical reason, please let me know and we will work together to make sure you don't fall behind.

Meet with Professor

Stop by my office hours (or schedule a meeting with me) at least once during the semester. This must be done before October 23rd. This can be a short meeting – just a few minutes if you prefer. It is an opportunity to touch base, address any questions or concerns you may have, and ensure that you're on track with the course material and your overall progress.

Final exam

This will take place during your scheduled final exam time (see schedule on next two pages). There will be 8 multiple choice questions, 12 short-answer questions (1-3 sentences), and 1 essay question (3-4 paragraphs).

Grading Scale

94% or above: A

90-93%: A-

87-89%: B+

83-86%: B

80-82%: B-

77-79%: C+

73-76%: C

70-72%: C-

67-69%: D+

63-66%: D

60-62%: D-

59% or below: F

Schedule

Week/Topic/Date	Readings/podcasts/videos/important activities	Assignments/Notes/other
<i>Week1. Intro to course</i>		
Tues 8/26		
Thurs 8/28		
<i>Week2. Logic primer & methods</i>		
Tues 9/2	[Optional resource: Baronett's "What Logic Studies"]	
Thurs 9/4	(1) Plato's <i>Apology</i>	In-class assignment #1
<i>Week3. Philosophical methods & The Canon</i>		
Tues 9/9		
Thurs 9/11	(1) Podcast by Yanis Varoufakis on Hypatia , (27 minutes) (2) The Lady Vanishes, by Ann-Sophie Barwich	Quiz 1
<i>Week4. Knowledge I</i>		
Tues 9/16	(1) Descartes' <i>Meditations I and II</i>	
Thurs 9/18		In-class assignment #2
<i>Week5. Knowledge II</i>		
Tues 9/23 NO CLASS	NO CLASS	
Thurs 9/25		Quiz 2
<i>Week6. Knowledge III</i>		
Tues 9/30	(1) Excerpt from Hume's <i>Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>	
Thurs 10/2 NO CLASS	NO CLASS	
<i>Week7.</i>		
Tues 10/7 <i>Knowledge IV</i>		In-class assignment #3
Thurs 10/9	[optional reading: Nyaya philosophers on induction]	Quiz 3
<i>Week8. Guest lecture</i>		
Tues 10/14 WE DO NOT MEET	CLASSES FOLLOW A MONDAY SCHEDULE	
Thurs 10/16	Guest lecture on Machine Learning and the New Riddle of Induction	In-class assignment #4
<i>Week9. Immortality & begin ethics</i>		
Tues 10/21	(1) Borges' <i>The Immortal</i>	In-class assignment #5
Thurs 10/23		Quiz 4
<i>Week10. Ethics II</i>		
Tues 10/28	Read together in class: <i>The Singer Solution to World Poverty</i>	In-class assignment #6
Thurs 10/30		
<i>Week11. Injustice</i>		
Tues 11/4	(1) Miranda Fricker on <i>Hermeneutical Injustice</i>	In-class assignment #7

Thurs 11/6		Quiz 5
<i>Week 12. Free will</i>		
Tues 11/11	(1) Nagel's "Ch. 6: Free Will" from <i>What does it all mean?</i>	
Thurs 11/13		In-class assignment #8
<i>Week 13. Free will II & Student's Choice</i>		
Tues 11/18	(1) Patricia Churchland's "Do we have free will?"	
Thurs 11/20	(1) TBD	Quiz 6
<i>Week 14. Student's Choice</i>		
Tues 11/25		
Thurs 11/27 NO CLASS	NO CLASS	
<i>Week 15. Student's Choice and Review</i>		
Tues 12/2	(1) TBD	
Thurs 12/4		Quiz 7
<i>Week 16. Student's Choice and Review</i>		
Tues 12/9	(1) Russell's "The value of philosophy"	
Thurs 12/11	Review for final exam	
Thurs 12/18 Final Exam	Final Exam 8:30 - 10:30am (Powdermaker Hall 152)	

How to do well in this course: Read the assigned readings, take notes on the readings, participate in discussion, *and ask questions*. Visit office hours or email me if you have any questions about the material in the course. Participate in class discussions (yes, I've listed this twice) and take notes. Most importantly: show up to each class well-rested and willing/ready to learn.

Please reach out to me if you need assistance so I can help you make the most of this course!

Academic Policies and Procedures:

<https://qc-undergraduate.catalog.cuny.edu/academic-policies-and-procedures>

Info about Title IX and Sexual Misconduct:

https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/title-ix/?post_type=campus_profile&p=154