

PHIL 1101: Problems of Philosophy

Summer Session 2

Syllabus

—subject to change—

Instructor: Özcan Karabağ

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Dates: July 14 - August 15, 2025

Format: Online, asynchronous

Credits: 3

How to reach me: Email me to make an online appointment. Always include PHIL 1101 in the subject line of your email. I will respond within 48 hours Monday-Friday.

Course Description

The description from the [Undergraduate Catalog](#): “Topics may include skepticism, proofs of God, knowledge of the external world, induction, free-will, the problem of evil, miracles, liberty and equality. CA 1.”

This course offers an introduction to philosophy. Philosophy is a very broad discipline, encompassing subject matters such as logic, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. In this course you will be introduced to a selection of philosophical themes through reading some classic and contemporary texts. The first week gives you a sense of what philosophy is and teaches you the basic tools often used in philosophical reasoning. The second week focuses on our knowledge of things: what is required for our beliefs to count as knowledge? The third week deals with the question whether an object or a person like you and I remains the same thing or person over time, even though the world, including us, is in constant change. The fourth week concerns the problem of free will and determinism: how can we reconcile the two apparently conflicting facts, i.e., that we are free in our actions on the one hand, and everything is determined by a cause on the other? We conclude the course by evaluating the arguments for the existence of God. This is the topic of the fifth week.

This course is asynchronous, which means that there will be no lectures. Each week you will read the texts assigned for that week. By “reading” I mean *very careful reading*, taking notes of the main points of each text, reflecting on potential objections and

alternatives to the arguments presented therein, etc. *You are responsible for carefully studying the assigned material, posting comments each week, and taking the quizzes by the end of each Friday (11:59 p.m. EST). So you should plan accordingly. In addition, you will write two short essays. (See the relevant HuskyCT page for due dates.)*

Course Objectives

By the successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Develop ways to think critically about some of the perennial philosophical problems.
2. Communicate the ideas and arguments presented in the readings as well as your own. This will require you to critically reflect on your own points of view and how they relate to others'.
3. Propose possible responses to the philosophical problems discussed in the assigned texts.
4. Assess how the classical and contemporary approaches to the philosophical problems discussed bear on some of the issues that we are facing today.

Course Materials

All the required course material is posted on HuskyCT course page. You do *not* need to purchase anything.

Course Requirements and Grading

- **Introduction on the Discussion Board (5%).** Please introduce yourself on the relevant page of the Discussion Board.
- **Weekly Discussion Posts (25%).** Each week you are required to post two comments on the relevant page of the Discussion Board on HuskyCT. One of those comments is expected to be something you find worth discussing in the readings, or an important question to ask, or an elaboration on an argument from the readings. The other comment must be a reply to a comment originally posted by one of your peers that week. You get full points for a comment or a reply as long as it shows that you have really engaged in the texts. You don't have to show off your knowledge. However, a very general comment or question, or just asking for elaboration without specifying any details, is going to get you no points. (You may email me if you need elaboration on how to post comments. We may also set up an

online meeting to discuss it.)

- **Quizzes (30%).** You will take an online quiz each week except the last. These consist of straightforward multiple-choice, true/false and fill-in-the-blank questions to assess your knowledge of the required course material. You will have one week to complete each quiz, and you are allowed only one attempt. You will take the quizzes using the Respondus Lockdown Browser, which you need to install to your computer before the semester/session begins. (Follow the steps on this web page: [Student Technology Guide: Respondus Lockdown Browser](#).) So please make sure that, in the duration of our course, you have access to a computer with a well-functioning camera. Extensions to the quizzes may be granted only in case of a valid excuse (such as a medical problem).
- **First Essay—approx. 500 words (20%).** You will write a short essay in which you answer one of the questions/prompts posted on HuskyCT. (See the relevant HuskyCT section for details.) Your grade will be determined by how accurately and clearly you (i) explain the relevant material from the textbook in your discussion, and (ii) construct your answer. You are strongly advised to read my Tips for Essay Writing (available on HuskyCT) before writing your essays. Following the steps listed and explained there will most certainly help you write a satisfactory essay for the course. *In writing your essay, you must in no circumstances get help from language models like ChatGPT. Such use will be considered plagiarism and penalized accordingly. (There have been instances of plagiarism in my courses before, and the students who plagiarized were severely penalized!)*
- **Second Essay—approx. 750 words (30%).** You will write a slightly longer essay in which, again, you answer one of the questions posted on HuskyCT. But this time you will do it in more words. (Again, for details see the relevant HuskyCT section.) The criteria for determining your grade are similar with those for the first essay. However, since you will have been provided feedback for your first essay and by now will know better, you are expected to do better in your second essay too.

Summary of Course Grading:

Course Components	Weight
Introduction on Discussion Board	5%
Weekly Discussion Posts	25%
Quizzes	30%
First Essay	20%
Second Essay	30%

Course Components	Weight
Total	110%

Grading Scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Grade
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	<60

Course Outline: Schedule and Assignments

Every assignment is due on the Friday of the week, at 11:59 p.m.

	Dates	Topics/Readings	Assignments
Week 1	7/14-7/18	Reasoning with Arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackburn, Introduction to <i>Think</i> Russell, The Value of Philosophy Perry et al., Logical Toolkit 	Readings Discussion Posts Quiz 1
Week 2	7/21-7/25	Knowledge and Skepticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Meditations 1 & 2 Pritchard, What is Knowledge? Do We Have Any?, pp. 21-28, 31-33 Gettier, Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? 	Readings Discussion Posts Quiz 2
Week 3	7/28-8/1	Identity through Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sider, Personal Identity Chisholm, Identity through Time, pp. 273-277 	Readings Discussion Posts Quiz 3 First Essay
Week 4	8/4-8/8	Free Will and Determinism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sider, Free Will and Determinism Chisholm, Human Freedom and the Self 	Readings Discussion Posts Quiz 4
Week 5	8/11-8/15	Proofs of the Existence of God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anselm, The Ontological Argument Aquinas, The Five Ways Paley, The Design Argument 	Readings Discussion Posts Second Essay

Course Policies

Due Dates & Submission of Late Work

All due dates can be found in the Course Schedule above. The instructor reserves the right to change due dates accordingly. All changes will be communicated by the instructor in an appropriate manner. If you are unable to submit an assignment by its due date and have a valid excuse (such as a medical condition), you may request an extension. Extensions need to be requested via email before the day the assignment is due, at the latest. Absent a request in advance, late assignments will not be accepted, and your grade for that assignment will be 0 (or FAIL).

Cheating & Plagiarism

This course expects that you will act in accordance with the [Guidelines for Academic Integrity](#) at the University of Connecticut. Reach out to me if you have doubts about what counts as plagiarism or complete the UConn Library's [Understanding Plagiarism](#). In cases of cheating, I will follow the [Academic Misconduct Procedures](#) per the University of Connecticut's standards.

Accessibility & Equity

If you have difficulty accessing the course or its materials based on a disability, please contact [the Center for Students with Disability \(CSD\)](#). They will confidentially provide me a letter describing accommodations that will help make the course more accessible. If there are other issues that make the course inaccessible, please reach out to me via email.

Student Authentication

The University of Connecticut is required to verify the identity of students who participate in distance learning or online courses and to establish that students who register in these courses are the same students who participate in and complete the course activities and assessments and receive academic credit. Verification and authentication of student identity in this course will include:

Method 1: Instructors must use HuskyCT as the primary repository and access point for course content, assessment, and activities, and students use their NetID and password process to securely access course content/ assessments.

Method 2: Instructors must use check-ins and/or office hours to discuss content, previous assignments, and progress on existing assignments.

Process: Instructors ask for identification and/or confirm student identity via official [UConn photo in StudentAdmin](#).

Students who do not complete the above-required authentication steps may be denied access to the course and given an incomplete. Students could lose credit if faculty cannot confirm the identity of the student enrolled in the course and completing activities and assessments.

Mutual Respect

Differing opinions and arguments are encouraged in this course but must be engaged in in a respectful manner. Do not mock someone for their opinion or use slurs. You should never feel embarrassed or ashamed about your opinion, concern, or question. We all come to this class in different ways, and we should feel comfortable in sharing our thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Remember that we all (including me) are working towards improving our communication skills in presenting our arguments as well as the arguments from the readings.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you arrives at this course with your own unique life experience. These experiences will affect how you interact with the material in this course, which may be intellectually and/or emotionally challenging. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually or emotionally challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement with philosophical issues, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Copyright Notice

The materials on this course are only for the use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated.

Resources Available to All Students

College is a challenging time in your life. Here is a list of resources that can help you navigate your experience as a student at the University of Connecticut, Hartford Campus. It is important to remember that you are not alone, and these resources are there for you when you need help to achieve your academic goals.

[The Writing Center](#)

[Academic Achievement Center](#)

[Academic Advising](#)

[Center for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Food Assistance at UConn](#)

[Dean of Students \(email\)](#)

[Information Technology Services](#)

[Mental Health – Student Health and Wellness](#)

[Title IX Office](#) – if you are experiencing gender-based violence or discrimination.

[ADA Coordinator and the Office of Institutional Equity](#)

[Student Health and Wellness](#) – if you are sick or injured and need medical care.

[Student Care Team](#)

[African American Cultural Center](#)

[Asian American Cultural Center](#)

[Native American Cultural Programs](#)

[Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center](#)

[Rainbow Center](#)

[Women's Center](#)

Evaluation of the Course

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University of Connecticut's standard procedures, which are administered by the [Office of the Institutional Research and Effectiveness \(OIRE\)](#).