

# PHIL 1301: Intro to Philosophy (Hybrid)

Fall 2026

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| <b>PHIL 1301-901</b><br>Tuesdays 12:30-1:45pm<br>Madla 204 | <b>PHIL 1301-905</b><br>Tuesdays 2:00-3:15pm<br>Madla 204 | <b>PHIL 1301-903</b><br>Tuesdays 3:30-4:45pm<br>Madla 204 |
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## Instructor

Dr. Merritt Rehn-DeBraal, PhD (she/her)

[mdebraal@tamusa.edu](mailto:mdebraal@tamusa.edu)

Office: CAB 313E

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 11:00am-12:15pm, or by appointment



## Catalog Description

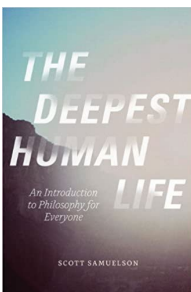
This course provides an introduction to the examination of major philosophical issues such as the existence of God, freedom and determinism, the relation between the mind and the body, moral rights and obligations, and the nature and limits of human knowledge. The focus will be these important issues and what classical and contemporary philosophers have said about them. This course meets the standards for the "Language, Philosophy, and Culture" category of courses under the core curriculum.

## Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify major philosophers and themes in the history of philosophy.
- Communicate philosophical ideas and arguments effectively through speaking and writing.
- Apply critical thinking skills to develop and evaluate philosophical questions and arguments.
- Demonstrate close reading and understanding of philosophical texts.
- Examine assumptions in their thinking and practice philosophical self-reflection.
- Engage with different philosophical approaches to ethical issues facing individuals and groups.

## Required Text



*The Deepest Human Life: An Introduction to Philosophy for Everyone.* Scott Samuelson. University of Chicago Press, 2015

**You will need access to this text to do well in this course.** The cost to purchase or rent this text usually ranges from \$6 to \$16. You can also [access a print or digital copy through the library for free here](#). There are multiple sections of this course using this text, so it may not always be available.

## Course Modality

This is a hybrid course that includes required weekly in-person meetings and asynchronous online instructional materials.

## Course Requirements

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Reading Journal Entries (10)  | 40% of final grade (4% each)  |
| 2. Exams (2)                     | 50% of final grade (25% each) |
| 3. Participation Reflections (2) | 10% of final grade (5% each)  |
| 4. Attendance                    | See course policies           |



### 1. Reading Journal Entries (40% of final grade)

Each week that we have new material(s) assigned, you will complete a reading journal entry on Blackboard designed to help you work through course materials, prepare for class discussion, and strengthen your close reading skills. Eleven entries will be offered. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest journal entry grade.

### 2. Exams (50% of final grade, 25% each)

At the end of each unit, we will have an in-class exam. These exams are designed to assess your understanding of course material and your ability to analyze, apply, evaluate, and think critically about it. The exam format will be made up of multiple choice and short-answer questions.

### 3. Participation Reflections (10% of final grade, 5% each)

Twice during the semester you will complete an in-class reflection on your participation in the course and how it has shaped your thinking and understanding of course material. The goals of this assignment are to encourage you to engage in philosophical communication and dialogue and to practice self-reflection, goal setting, and metacognition.

### 4. Attendance. See course policies below.

## Grading Scale

A = 90–100%

B = 80–89%

C = 70–79%

D = 60–69%

F = &lt;60%

## Course Policies

### Attendance



You are allowed **two free absences**. Any additional absences, regardless of reason, will result in a **3-point deduction** from your final grade per absence unless you complete an attendance makeup assignment. Arriving late or leaving early will count as half an absence. Being disruptive or off task during class may also result in being marked absent. You are responsible for all material covered in class regardless of attendance.

## What Should You Do If You Need to Miss Class?

In most cases, you do not need to contact me or send an explanation for missing class. Instead, do the following:

1. **Check Blackboard** for in-class materials (See Week # > Instructional Materials)
2. **Contact a classmate** for notes, if possible
3. **Email** or drop by my office hours **if you have additional questions** or if you're missing multiple classes and we need to create a plan to keep you caught up
4. **Complete attendance makeup assignment(s)** during finals week to avoid attendance penalties, if needed.

## Due Dates and Late Work Policy



You are allowed a **12-hour grace period** on all journal entries. This means these assignments are not considered late until 12 hours after the listed due date/time. Assignments submitted after that time will be accepted **up to five days late** with a penalty of **10% per day late** unless you have an approved extension. Assignments will not be accepted more than five days late without an approved extension. Assignments submitted after the original due date will not receive written feedback.

## How to Request an Extension

To request an extension beyond the grace period, use this form: [Extension Request Form](#).

**Extension requests will ONLY be accepted using this form.** Within two business days of submitting your request, you should receive an email from me confirming whether your request has been approved. No explanation is required unless specifically requested. Extensions aren't guaranteed. I typically approve most requests if these criteria are met:

- Request is submitted correctly and all necessary information is included
- Request is submitted BEFORE due date (late requests considered on case-by-case basis)
- Requested due date will not put you too far behind
- You are making satisfactory progress in the course and turning in most work on time

## Makeup Exams

For makeup exam requests, contact me directly right away. Exams must be made up within **ten days** of the original exam using the testing center. Students taking makeup exams will receive an alternative version of the exam composed of short answer questions and an essay question.

## Communication

The best way to contact me is by **email** ([mdebraal@tamusa.edu](mailto:mdebraal@tamusa.edu)) or Blackboard message. I do my best to respond to all emails/messages within two business days. If you don't hear back from me within that time frame, please check in with me again in case I missed your message. All correspondence must occur via university email accounts or Blackboard. Make sure to check your university email regularly.



## Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements, and ethical misconduct. You are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Misconduct Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.



University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, **a grade of F on the assignment or a failing grade in the course**. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. If you are struggling with an assignment or have questions about how to acknowledge sources in your work, get in touch with me. For additional resources, see [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

## AI Policy for Our Course

Use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Copilot, Gemini, etc.) is **NOT allowed on any assignments for our course**. This course assumes that all work you submit is generated by you. This means that your work should be based on your own reading, thinking, and understanding. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

**Background/Reasoning.** In this course we are working on skills in critical thinking, close reading of texts, evaluating arguments, and understanding complex philosophical concepts. These skills are increasingly important as we navigate continued developments in AI. At the same time, misuse of AI can keep us from developing these skills. For the purposes of our course, we need to work on generating our own questions, arguments, and perspectives without reliance on generative AI. Doing so will ensure we are developing the skills needed to use AI effectively and responsibly.

## Personal Technology

Philosophy happens through dialogue! It is important that we all be present and engaged in the classroom to foster a productive learning environment and develop our philosophical thinking. **Use of personal electronics, such as phones and laptops, should be limited as much as possible during class.** Please plan to **print** any readings, notes, and assignments that you need to refer to during class and bring paper and a pen or pencil to take notes. If you do need to use technology in class, make sure that it is for **class purposes only**. If you are using technology in a way that is off task, distracting to me or to your classmates, or otherwise disruptive to the learning environment, you will be asked to put your electronics away, leave the classroom, and/or refrain from using any personal technology in class.

## Syllabus Note

In this and other philosophy courses, all texts are open to critique. You will not be required to adopt any particular beliefs, and you will be evaluated on your mastery of skills and concepts, not personal beliefs. The readings and topics covered in this course reflect disciplinary standards for the field of philosophy. Should you have concerns about any of the materials in this course, please reach out to me for an explanation of why these materials are included and to discuss strategies for completing the work in a manner that meets course objectives.

## University Policies and Resources

For additional university policies and resources, see syllabus addendum on Blackboard.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DHL = *The Deepest Human Life*, by Scott Samuelson (required text)

\*Page numbers based on print edition. See assigned chapters/sections if yours differ.

BB = on Blackboard (see weekly module)

Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the dates listed unless otherwise indicated.

| Unit 1: Wisdom, Ethics, and Values |                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1<br>8/25                     | Philosophy Begins in Wonder | <b>TUES 8/25 (in class)</b><br><b>Read</b> Syllabus<br><b>Read</b> Intellectual Virtues Handout                                                                                                                         |
| Week 2<br>9/1                      | What is Philosophy?         | <b>By MON 8/31</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 1-15 (Part 1: What is Philosophy? & Ch. 1)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>                                                            |
| Week 3<br>9/8                      | Socratic Wisdom             | <b>By TUES 9/8, noon*</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 16-27 (Ch. 2: Beginning to "...worth risking.")<br><b>Journal Entry due</b><br><br>*Due Date extended due to Labor Day 9/7 |
| Week 4<br>9/15                     | Epicureanism                | <b>By MON 9/14</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 49-60 (Ch. 3: Exquisite Materialism)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>                                                                  |
| Week 5<br>9/22                     | Suffering Revisited         | <b>By MON 9/21</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> Alessandri, "I Suffer, Therefore I am" (BB)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>                                                                   |

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| Week 6<br>9/29  | Stoicism                     | <b>By MON 9/28</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 61-75 (Ch. 4: Mysterious Freedom)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>        |
| Week 7<br>10/6  | Anger Revisited              | <b>By MON 10/5</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> Cherry, "Love, Anger, and Racial Injustice" (BB)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b> |
| Week 8<br>10/13 | <b>Unit 1<br/>Assessment</b> | <b>TUES 10/13 (in class)</b><br><b>Exam 1</b><br><b>Participation Reflection 1</b>                                                                         |

## Unit 2: Knowledge & Reality

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|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 9<br>10/20  | Mysticism                      | <b>By MON 10/19</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 81-95 (Ch. 5: The Ecstasy Without a Name: Beginning of chapter to "...tasks of human culture.")<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>   |
| Week 10<br>10/27 | Rationalism                    | <b>By MON 10/26</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> DHL, p. 99-111 (Ch. 6: In Nightmares Begins Rationality: Beginning of chapter to "... 'I am that I am.'")<br><b>Journal Entry due</b> |
| Week 11<br>11/3  | Embodied Subjects              | <b>By MON 11/2</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> Brison, excerpt from <i>Aftermath: Violence &amp; the Remaking of a Self</i> (BB) [CN: Sexual violence]<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>    |
| Week 12<br>11/10 | Memory & Forgetting            | <b>By MON 11/9</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> Borges, "Funes, the Memorious" (BB)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>                                                                        |
| Week 13<br>11/17 | Intellectual Virtues Revisited | <b>By MON 11/16</b><br><b>View</b> Instructional materials (BB)<br><b>Read</b> Intellectual Virtues Handout (BB)<br><b>Journal Entry due</b>                                                                         |

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| Week 14<br><br>11/24<br><br><i>Fall Break</i><br>11/25-11/28 | Synthesis &<br>Reflection    | Note: We will not meet as a class this week. Use this reassigned time to prepare for Exam 2, view asynchronous instructional materials on Blackboard, and/or set up a time to meet with me one-on-one. |
| Week 15<br><br>12/1                                          | <b>Unit 2<br/>Assessment</b> | <b>TUES 12/1 (in class)</b><br><b>Exam 2</b><br><b>Participation Reflection 2</b>                                                                                                                      |
| Finals Week<br><br>12/5–12/11                                |                              | <b>Attendance Makeup Assignments due MON 12/7</b><br>(for students with 3 or more absences only)                                                                                                       |

Note: Any changes to the schedule or syllabus will be communicated in class and through Blackboard.

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**Philosophy is an odyssey.** This odyssey is open to everyone. If the beliefs we start from are truly worthwhile, then we shall return to them and know them for the first time; if not, then we'll have to seek out beliefs that work better. Either way, we return invigorated with meaning.

SCOTT SAMUELSON

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