

Texas A&M University San Antonio

Introduction to Philosophy Course Syllabus

Information and Description

Course Information

Course Title: Introduction to Philosophy

Course Number: PHIL 1301-001

Meeting Location: 236 Madla

Number of Credits: 3 Credits

Instructor Information

Instructor: Anthony E. Givhan, Ph.D.

Office Hours: By Appointment

E-mail: agivhan@tamusa.edu

Course 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. TSI Restriction(s): Reading and Writing

Course Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Define, identify, and evaluate philosophical arguments.
- Describe and explain several major branches of philosophy; including epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion and the key question(s) associated with them.
- Summarize and identify how some major philosophical figures have attempted to answer various key questions in these branches of philosophy.

- Identify some of the pros and cons of the various positions on these key philosophical questions.
- Demonstrate knowledge about a contemporary philosophical issue.

Required Course Materials

Pojman, Louis P. and Vaughn, Lewis; Philosophy: The Quest for Truth, 11 Edition, 2019 (9780190945671)

Additional Required Resources

Articles posted on BlackBoard

Assessments and Assignments

Course Assessments

Assignment Weights

Assignment Group	Weight
Reaction Questions	20%
Exams	45%
Presentation	15%
Critical Thinking Paper	20%

Assignment Descriptions

Reaction Questions (20 points) - You will be required to give brief (one to two paragraphs) reactions to 10 questions posed in response to the readings throughout the course. The primary purpose of these questions is to provide you with incentive to prepare for and come to class and be ready to participate in class discussion. The answers will be worth 2 points each and all together worth 20% of your grade.

Exams (45 points) - There will be three exams containing short answer questions. They will cover material in the readings and/or discussed just prior to the exam and each will be worth 15% of your grade.

Presentations (15 points) - Each person will be involved in a class presentation. You and a partner (if assigned) are both to clearly and concisely explain the position of the person you are assigned using a visual aid tool such as Power Point. At a

minimum your presentation should include who the author(s) is/are, the position taken, and an explanation of the author's defense of his or her position, that is, the reasons given for the position. You will be graded on clarity, thoroughness, and coherence. A one (1) page (typed, 12-point font, double spaced) written summary of your article (with both presenters' name on it, if you have a partner) is to be turned in on the day of the presentation. The presentation will be worth 15% of your grade.

Critical Thinking Paper (20 points) – This writing assignment will consist of a paper (approximately 3 to 5 pages, typed, one-inch margins, double spaced, and 12-point font) examining two articles on the death penalty. Burton Leister: The Death Penalty is Permissible (in the text) and Hugo Adam Bedau: No, the Death Penalty is not Morally Permissible (posted). The assignment will be worth 20% of your final grade. The format of the paper will be as follows:

- A. Briefly explain each author's position on the issue.
- B. Advance a criticism of one of the author's positions.
- C. Talk about what that author might say in reply to your criticism.
- D. Talk about your rejoinder to that reply.
- E. Follow the format - 3 to 5 pages, typed, one-inch margins, double-spaced, 12-point font; cite the author to which you refer; paper in on time.

Grading Scale

- A** 90-100%
- B** 80-89%
- C** 70-79%
- D** 60-69%
- F** 0-59%

Attendance

Philosophy classes are often only as productive as the students in them decide to make them. Class participation and discussion are essential components of a quality philosophy course. If you do not attend class, these necessary components will suffer, and you and your fellow students will suffer as a result. As such, attendance is extremely important. Thus, your attendance and engagement during our class sessions are expected.

If there is a campus emergency in which the campus closes, such as major weather event, this does not affect assignment or test dates and deadlines. Deadlines remain fixed unless I notify you of a change.

Late Assignments

Late assignments may not be accepted without prior instructor authorization and can result in a lower grade. You must request my authorization within 24 hours of the posted due date. It is your responsibility to contact me in writing when course progression may be affected.

Participation

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. To assure that all students have the opportunity to gain from time spent in class; students are encouraged not to engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom environment shall result, minimally, in a request to leave class.

We will be discussing difficult, controversial, and occasionally emotional issues. A certain amount of disagreement is therefore expected. Disagreement is one thing, however, disrespect quit another. Please refrain from personal attacks. The trick is to disagree without becoming disagreeable. Also, please speak to everyone or no one.

Course Schedule

Module	Module Activities – Subject to change
Week 1	1/17 – Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Outline. Procedures and Requirements. What is Philosophy? The Value of Philosophy.
Week 2	1/22 – A Bit of Logic 1/24 – Knowledge: What can we know? Pojman, Chapter IIIA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Theories of Knowledge: Descartes, Locke • Question on Knowledge
Week 3	1/29 – Knowledge Cont’d: What can we know? Pojman, Chapter IIIA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical Theories of Knowledge: Berkeley, Hume and Hospers (Posted) 2/31 – Knowledge Cont’d, Pojman, Chapter III.B. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth, Rationality, and Cognitive Relativism: Russell, James, Rorty, Dennett and Siegel • Question on Truth
Week 4	2/5 – Knowledge Cont’d, Pojman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume and Salmon, Induction 2/7 – Knowledge Cont’d <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Givhan (Posted), Realism and Instrumentalism
Week 5	2/12 – Exam 1 2/14 -Philosophy of Religion: Arguments for the Existence of God - Pojman, Chapter II.A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cosmological Argument: Aquinas and Craig –pro, Edwards – contra • Question on God
Week 6	2/19 - Philosophy of Religion Cont’d: Arguments for the Existence of God - Pojman, Chapter II.A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Teleological Argument: Paley, Hume; The Ontological Argument: Anselm and Gaunilo, Rowe 2/21 – Philosophy of Religion Cont’d: The Problem of Evil and Is Faith Compatible with Reason – Pojman, Chapter II.B. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson and Hick on evil

Week 7	<p>2/26– Philosophy of Religion Cont’d: Is Faith Compatible with Reason – Pojman, Chapter II.C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pascal, Clifford, James, Plantinga on Faith and Reason <p>Question on Faith</p> <p>2/28 – Philosophy of Mind - The Mind-Body Problem - Pojman, Chapter IV.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moreland – Contemporary Dualism; Churchland –Materialism <p>Question on Mind/Body</p>
Week 8	<p>3/4 – Philosophy of Mind - The Mind-Body Problem Cont.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fodor - The Mind Body Problem; Searle - Minds, Brains, and Computers <p>3/6 – Philosophy of Mind – Is There Life After Death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video, “Through the Worm Hole”
Week 9	<p>3/11 – 3/15 SPRING BREAK NO Class</p>
Week 10	<p>3/18 and 3/20 – Freedom of the Will and Determinism – Pojman, Chapter V</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • d’Holback, Lamont (Posted), Stace, Frankfurt, and Taylor (Posted) <p>Question on Freedom, Due 3/18</p>
Week 11	<p>3/25 – Exam 2</p> <p>3/27 – Ethics, Are there any moral absolutes? Why should we be moral? Pojman, Chapter VI.A. and VI.B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruth Benedict: Morality is Relative; James Rachels: Morality is not Relative • Plato – Gyges’ Ring and Socrates’ Dilemma; Pojman – A Critique of Ayn Rand <p>Question on Ethics</p>
Week 12	<p>4/1 and 4/3 – Ethics Cont’d: Which is the correct ethical theory? Pojman, Chapter VI.C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant – The Moral Law; Mill – Utilitarianism • Sartre – Existentialist Ethics; Rachels – The Divine Command Theory <p>Question on Ethical Theories, 4/1</p>
Week 13	<p>4/8 – Ethical Issues – Presentations</p> <p>4/10 – Ethical Issues – Presentations</p> <p>Paper Due, 4/10</p>
Week 14	<p>4/15 - Ethical Issues – Presentations</p> <p>4/17 – Ethical Issues - Presentations</p>

Week 15	<p>4/22 – Political Philosophy – Pojman, Chapter VII.A.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wolff – In Defense of Anarchism • Hobbs – The Absolutist Answer • Locke – The Democratic Answer • Mill – A Classical Liberal Answer • Rawls – The Contemporary Liberal Answer <p>Question on Political Philosophy</p> <p>4/24 – What is the Meaning of Life? Pojman, Chapter VIII.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epicurus – Moderate Hedonism; Epictetus – Stoicism <p>Camus – Life is Absurd</p>
Week 16	<p>4/29 – What is the Meaning of Life? Cont.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pojman – Religion Gives Meaning to Life; Nagel – The Absurd <p>Question on The Meaning of Life</p> <p>5/1 – Finals Start</p>

Academic Policies

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. All students 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 particular paper or 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 ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact me for an assessment of the situation.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for individuals with disabilities. Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations of their disability. If you have a disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

ACADEMIC LEARNING CENTER:

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment-based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

COUNSELING RESOURCES:

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday – Friday. After hours crisis support is available by calling 210-784-1331. Please contact UPD at 911 if harm to self or harm to others is imminent.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (to the extent permitted by law), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff, and faculty who are registered in JagE Alert, will have the option to receive a text message, email, and/or phone call with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

FINANCIAL AID AND VERIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE:

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

JAGUAR WRITING CENTER:

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS:

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. In addition, you may notify the instructor if you are comfortable doing so.

MILITARY AFFAIRS:

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance, if possible, about special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots' Casa in-person, Room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@tamusa.edu or (210)784- 1397.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under A&M System policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY:

We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equityminded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the classroom, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.

- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

THE SIX-DROP RULE:

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

STATEMENT OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism, and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than

those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about an incident of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions of students' freedoms and responsibilities to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System, including the A&M San Antonio Student Code of Conduct.

Students' Rights

- A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
- Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
- A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
- Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

- A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and staff, and the administration.

- A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted and compliant with the University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and in the University Catalog.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
- A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
- A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official University notifications.
- We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated

Important Information

Notice

Information in this syllabus was, to the best knowledge of the instructor, considered correct and complete when distributed for use at the beginning of the semester. The instructor, however, reserves the right, acting within the policies and procedures of the university to make changes in course content or instructional techniques.