

PHIL 1301: Intro to Philosophy (Hybrid)

Spring 2026

PHIL 1301-900	PHIL 1301-902	PHIL 1301-903
Tuesdays 12:30-1:45pm Business Library Hall 366	Tuesdays 3:30-4:45pm Classroom Hall 219	Tuesdays 5:30-6:45pm Classroom Hall 219

Instructor

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

mdebraal@tamusa.edu

Office: CAB 313E

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00am-12:15pm, 2:00pm-3:15pm, or by appointment



Overview

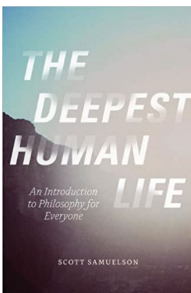
This course is an introduction to philosophy that will explore what past and present philosophers (and you) have to say about themes central to our lives, such as wisdom, happiness, knowledge, reality, and ethics. As we work through these themes, we will also develop intellectual virtues essential to good thinking, including clarity, charity, and curiosity.

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

Learning Outcomes

- Communicate effectively about central themes in the history of philosophy and demonstrate an understanding of philosophical texts and arguments through speaking and writing.
- Apply critical thinking skills to develop and evaluate philosophical questions and arguments.
- Identify and critically examine unexamined assumptions in your own thinking.
- Demonstrate skills in personal and social responsibility through self-assessment and engagement with 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 (print or eBook)

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 Requirements

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Reading Journal Entries | 20% of final grade |
| 2. Quizzes | 20% of final grade |
| 3. Exams (3) | 60% of final grade (20% each) |
| 4. Attendance | See below |



1. Reading Journal Entries (20% 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. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest journal entry grade.

2. Quizzes (20% of final grade)

After each class session (excluding exam dates), a quiz will be posted on Blackboard. These quizzes are designed to help you review and assess your understanding of course material, prepare for exams, apply concepts outside the classroom, reflect on class discussions, and set personal learning goals. Quizzes will be untimed and open book/open notes. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

3. Exams (60% of final grade, 20% 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 include multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions.

Grading Scale

A = 90–100%

B = 80–89%

C = 70–79%

D = 60–69%

F = <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)** when offered to avoid attendance penalties, if needed.

Due Dates and Late Work Policy



You are allowed a **12-hour grace period** on all quizzes and 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. Note: For Exam 3, there will be a shorter window for makeup exams, and documentation may be required.

Communication

The best way to contact me is by **email** (mdebraal@tamusa.edu). I do my best to respond to all emails 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. 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

You are NOT allowed to use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, on assignments for our course. This course assumes that all work you submit is generated by you. 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.

Personal Technology

Students may use personal electronics during in-person sessions **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.

***For additional university policies and resources**, see syllabus addendum on Blackboard. 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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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: The Practice of Philosophy			
Week 1 1/20	Philosophy Begins in Wonder	By TUES 1/20 Read Syllabus	By FRI 1/23 Quiz due
Week 2 1/27	What is Philosophy?	By MON 1/26 View Instructional materials (BB) Read DHL, p. 1-15 (Part 1: What is Philosophy? & Ch. 1) Journal Entry due	By FRI 1/30 Quiz due
Week 3 2/3	Socratic Wisdom	By MON 2/2 View Instructional materials (BB) Read DHL, p. 16-27 (Ch. 2: Beginning to "...worth risking.") Journal Entry due	By FRI 2/6 Quiz due
Week 4 2/10	Epicureanism	By MON 2/9 View Instructional materials (BB) Read DHL, p. 49-60 (Ch. 3: Exquisite Materialism) Journal Entry due	By FRI 2/13 Quiz due
Week 5 2/17	Stoicism	By MON 2/16 View Instructional materials (BB) Read DHL, p. 61-75 (Ch. 4: Mysterious Freedom) Journal Entry due	By FRI 2/20 Quiz due
Week 6 2/24	Unit 1 Assessment	TUES 2/24 (in class) Exam 1	
Unit 2: Ethics & Values			
Week 7 3/3	Anger Revisited	By MON 3/2 View Instructional materials (BB) Read Cherry, excerpt from <i>Case for Rage</i> (BB) Journal Entry due	By FRI 3/6 Quiz due

Spring Break 3/9–3/13—No Classes			
Week 8 3/17	Suffering Revisited	By MON 3/16 View Instructional materials (BB) Read Alessandri, “I Suffer, Therefore I am” (BB) Journal Entry due	By FRI 3/20 Quiz due
Week 9 3/24	Problem of Evil	By MON 3/23 View Instructional materials (BB) Read DHL, p. 161-179 (Ch. 9: Beast that Is and Is Not) Journal Entry due	By FRI 3/27 Quiz due
Week 10 3/31	Unit 2 Assessment	TUES 3/31 (in class) Exam 2	
Unit 3: Knowledge & Reality			
Week 11 4/7	Rationalism & Cartesian Dualism	By MON 4/6 View Instructional materials (BB) Read Descartes, M1 & M2 (BB) Watch “Cartesian Skepticism” (BB) Journal Entry due	By FRI 4/10 Quiz due
Week 12 4/14	Playfulness as Virtue	By MON 4/13 View Instructional materials (BB) Read Nguyen, “Playfulness vs. Epistemic Traps” (BB) Journal Entry due	By FRI 4/17 Quiz due
Week 13 4/21	Synthesis & Reflection	By MON 4/20 View Instructional materials (BB) Read hooks, “Critical Thinking” (BB) Read Intellectual Virtues handout (BB) Journal Entry due	By FRI 4/24 Quiz due
Week 14 4/28	Unit 3 Assessment	TUES 4/28 (in class) Exam 3	Attendance Makeups due 5/4