

Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 1000 009 – Utah Valley University Syllabus – Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Josh Brekel (He/Him/His)

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11am-12pm and by appointment

COURSE MEETINGS:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10:00-10:50 am

Room: Liberal Arts Building 219

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

- *Five Dialogues*, by Plato, translated by G.M.A. Grube and John M. Cooper, Hackett Classics, 2002. ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))
- *The Complete Essays*, by Michel de Montaigne, translated by Donald M. Frame, Stanford University Press, 1958. ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))
- *Meditations on First Philosophy*, by René Descartes, translated by Donald Cress, Hackett Classics, 1993. ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))
- *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, by Walter M. Miller Jr., Spectra, 1984. ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))
- ***On Truth*, by Simon Blackburn, Oxford University Press, 2018. ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))**
- *On Bullshit*, by Harry Frankfurt, Princeton University Press, 2005; 2025 (either edition is fine). ([Publisher](#)) ([Amazon](#))
- Other required texts will be made available via pdf files on Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

According to the [UVU Course Catalog](#), this course is “designed to investigate major philosophical ideas from the Pre-Socratic era to the present. Students should develop philosophical skills through supervised analysis of readings in epistemology (knowledge), metaphysics (reality), ethics (values), and social philosophy. [The course] emphasizes the articulation, assessment, and discussion of fundamental religious, social, political issues through class discussions, lectures, media, and writing projects.” See course schedule below for more information on specific topics of focus this semester.

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

There are no prerequisites for this course. Students of all philosophical abilities are welcome.

EXPECTATIONS:

Academic credits are expected to meet the federal credit hour definition of **2-3 hours** (minimum) of work outside of class **for every hour** of time spent in class. For an in-person 3-credit course such as this, you should expect to be spending a *minimum* of **7-10 hours per week** working on this course. To get the most out of that time, meet these class expectations:

- Carefully read the listed readings **prior** to class,
- Come to class and take notes on the material presented in class,

- Be willing to respectfully engage in class discussion, and
- Complete listed assignments by listed due dates.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

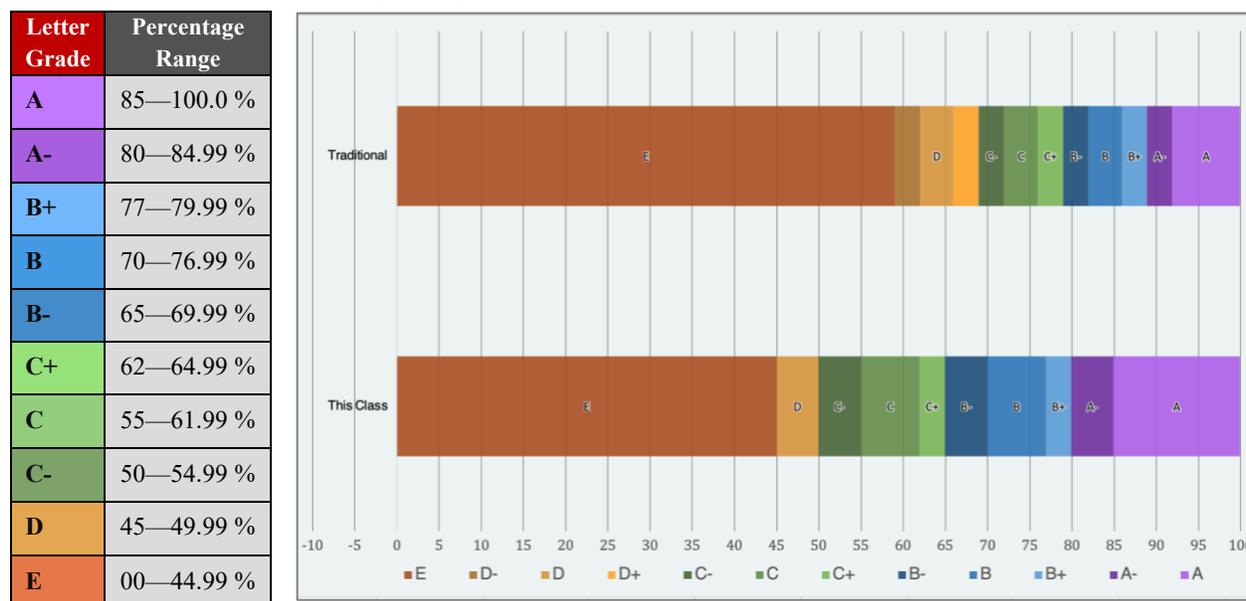
Assignment Category	Description	Number Assigned	Number Dropped	Weight	Grade Allocation
Skill-Building Assignments	<p>Assignments designed to build basic philosophical skills. Each SBA is worth 5% of the overall course grade.</p> <p>More information provided here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are five different types of SBA assignments to choose from. • Students may choose which SBA type to complete on each due date, but over the semester they must attempt at least three different SBA types in total. • There are six SBA due dates throughout the semester; students may submit all six if they wish. • The lowest two SBA scores will be dropped when calculating the final grade. • Details about the 5 different types of SBA assignments are provided on Canvas. 	6	2	5%	20%
Exams	One midterm exam and cumulative final exam.* The structure of these exams will be decided during the semester, but the chosen structure will likely include both short answer and long essay questions.	2	0	15%	30%
Papers	<p>Short (3–5 page) papers. Each paper is worth 12% of the course grade.</p> <p>More information provided here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers must be turned in with proof of editing and revision. Papers will not be graded until such proof is provided. • Proof of editing/revision examples include (but are not 	3	1	12%	24%

	<p>limited to): a series of .docx files that show how the paper developed over time, a <i>working</i> link to a file that shows revision history, or scan of handwritten drafts/plans for the paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three papers will be assigned; the lowest score will be dropped. If a student is happy with their grade after the first two papers, then they do not need to turn in the third paper. 				
Free Rounding Credit	Everyone receives a "free" percentage point. You don't have to do anything to earn this, but if a student asks me to round their grade at the end of the semester, then the student loses this rounding credit.	1	0	1%	1%
Reading Journal	<p>Prior to each class with an assigned reading, students should complete a handwritten journal entry (see Canvas for entry expectations). Reading Journal entries will be <i>collected (on paper) 15 times randomly</i> throughout the semester and assessed on the criteria below.</p> <p>Individual Entry Grading Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ⊗: No submission. • ✓: Sub-standard submission indicating a lack of effort, failure to engage with/complete the reading. • ✓✓: Satisfactory submission demonstrating thoughtful engagement with the reading material. <p>Because entries will be collected 15 times and each entry is assessed out of two checkmarks, students have the opportunity to earn <u>up to 30 total checkmarks</u> in the semester.</p> <p>Semester-long performance is assessed out of 250 points. The number of points a student receives corresponds to the number of check marks they earned in the semester like so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-14 ✓s: 0 points (E) • 15-17 ✓s: 125 points (C-) • 18-20 ✓s: 165 points (B-) • 21-23 ✓s: 180 points (B) • 24+ ✓s: 250 points (A) 				25%
				Total	100%

* There is a chance that there will be small extra credit opportunities on the exam(s). All extra credit opportunities are up to the instructor's discretion.

GRADING SCHEME:

This course uses letter grades corresponding to the grading scheme specified in the table to the bottom left. For the sake of clarity, I also created a graphic that contrasts this course’s grading scale with the grading scale you are (probably) most familiar with. The grading scale that you are familiar with is titled “Traditional” and this course’s grading scale is titled “This Class” in the chart below.



For the final overall course grade, the instructor will calculate each student’s average letter grade weighted by the assignments listed in Course Assignments section. Then, the instructor will report the nearest allowed letter grade to the Registrar’s Office. Note that the University only records letter grades for use on Transcripts and GPA calculations.

LATE-WORK POLICY:

Except for Reading Journal entries, all late work will be subject to a penalty of **5% per calendar day late** for 7 days after the assignment is due. After **7 calendar days**, late assignments will no longer be accepted. Reading Journal entries will not be accepted late. No assignments will be accepted after the Friday before Finals Week.

Assignment extensions will not be granted unless: The student provides official documentation (from the university or a legitimate medical institution) that sufficiently explains why the assignment must be turned in late. Note that pictures of at-home COVID-19 (or similar) diagnostic tests do not count as official documentation. Extensions can be granted after the assignment due date (within reason), provided that the student offers sufficient justification for the lack of prior notice. If University-sanctioned extracurricular/co-curricular activities or religious holidays prevent a student from attending class, then it is the responsibility of that student to notify the instructor prior to the anticipated absence. Furthermore, it is the student’s responsibility to take the initiative to make-up missed work in a timely

fashion. In other words, let the instructor know about any absences or conflicts before they occur so that we can work together to find a solution.

There are **no exceptions** to these policies. This course uses a generous grading scheme and late policy in recognition of the difficulty of balancing college with other aspects of life. However, success in college requires a high level of dedication and commitment from students. For those reasons, official documentation is the only way to avoid being penalized for late work. It is the student's responsibility to take the initiative to make-up missed work in a timely fashion.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic integrity is taken seriously in this course. It is expected that students will maintain a high standard of academic integrity—cheating will not be tolerated. Unless written permission (in a Skill-Building Assignment, for instance) is given by the instructor, the use of ChatGPT or other “Artificial Intelligence” models is prohibited. In an effort to reduce AI use, this course requires proof of editing and revision with the submission of papers. Papers are not graded until such proof is provided (and are counted late according to the above late policy until that proof is provided). At an absolute minimum, instances of academic misconduct will result in a substantial grade penalty on the assignment. Often, academic misconduct is grounds for a failing grade in the course and a report to the university. Talk to the instructor if you have questions about academic integrity.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Below is an extremely tentative plan for the semester. As the semester proceeds, it may become necessary to check Canvas for updates to the schedule. Come to class with the reading for that day completed.

Week	Date	DOW	Topic	Reading	Assignments
1	1/5/26	M	Syllabus & Philosophical Puzzles	Syllabus!	
	1/7/26	W	What is philosophy?	Plato, <i>Apology</i>	
	1/9/26	F	What is philosophy?	Plato, <i>Apology</i> (reread)	
2	1/12/26	M	What is virtue? What is knowledge?	Plato, <i>Meno</i> (1st half)	
	1/14/26	W	What is virtue? What is knowledge?	Plato, <i>Meno</i> (2nd half)	
	1/16/26	F	Should we believe anything?	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> , Selections	SBA #1 Due
3	1/19/26	M	No Class - MLK Jr. Day		
	1/21/26	W	Should we believe anything?	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Pyrrhonism</i> , More Selections	
	1/23/26	F	Writing/Argument Workshop (No class meeting, but watch the video on Canvas)	Watch Canvas Video	
4	1/26/26	M	Are you dreaming?	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 1	
	1/28/26	W	Are you dreaming?	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 2	

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	1/30/26	F	Does God Exist?	Anselm, <i>The Ontological Argument</i>	SBA #2 Due
5	2/2/26	M	Does God Exist?	Miller, <i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i> , Chapters 24, 25, 26, 27	
	2/4/26	W	Does God Exist?	Miller, <i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i> , Chapters 28, 29, 30	
	2/6/26	F	Are you a brain in a vat?	Putnam, <i>Reason, Truth, and History</i> , Ch.1	Paper #1 Due
6	2/9/26	M	Are you a brain in a vat?	Putnam, <i>Reason, Truth, and History</i> , Ch.1 (reread)	
	2/11/26	W	Catch-Up Day	No New Reading	
	2/13/26	F	Is it true that murder is wrong? Or is that just your feeling?	Montaigne, "Of Cannibals"	
7	2/16/26	M	No Class - President's Day		
	2/18/26	W	Is it true that murder is wrong? Or is that just your feeling?	Morrow, <i>Moral Reasoning</i> , "Chapter 9: Skepticism, Subjectivism, and Relativism"	
	2/20/26	F	Review	No New Reading	
8	2/23/26	M	Midterm Exam		Midterm Exam
	2/25/26	W	What is truth?	Blackburn, <i>On Truth</i> , pp. 1-24	
	2/27/26	F	What is truth?	Blackburn, <i>On Truth</i> , pp. 25-50	
9	3/2/26	M	What is truth?	Blackburn, <i>On Truth</i> , pp. 51-73	SBA #3 Due
	3/4/26	W	How do theories of truth meet the world?	Blackburn, <i>On Truth</i> , pp. 77-102	
	3/6/26	F	Writing/Argument Workshop		
10	3/9/26	M	No Class - Spring Break		
	3/11/26	W			
	3/13/26	F			
11	3/16/26	M	How do theories of truth meet the world?	Blackburn, <i>On Truth</i> , pp. 103-128	
	3/18/26	W	Are you in an echo chamber?	Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber"	
	3/20/26	F	No Class Meeting	No New Reading (work on your paper!)	Paper #2 Due
12	3/23/26	M	What is bullshit?	Frankfurt, <i>On Bullshit</i> , pp. 1-34	
	3/25/26	W	What is bullshit?	Frankfurt, <i>On Bullshit</i> , pp. 35-67	
	3/27/26	F	Do we have free will?	Eagleman, "The Brain on Trial"	SBA #4 Due
13	3/30/26	M	Do we have free will?	Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"	
	4/1/26	W	Do we have free will?	St. Augustine, "Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will"	
	4/3/26	F	Is it wrong to believe on insufficient evidence?	Pascal, "The Wager"	
14	4/6/26	M	Is it wrong to believe on insufficient evidence?	Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"	

	4/8/26	W	Is it wrong to believe on insufficient evidence?	James, "The Will to Believe"	
	4/10/26	F	What is epistemic injustice?	Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> , Introduction	SBA #5 Due
15	4/13/26	M	What is epistemic injustice?	Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice and a Role for Virtue in the Politics of Knowing," Sec. 4	
	4/15/26	W	What about science?	Longino, <i>Science as Social Knowledge</i> , pp.3-7	
	4/17/26	F	What about science?	Douglas, "Science and Values: The Pervasive Entanglement"	Paper #3 Due
16	4/20/26	M	What is philosophy? (Redux)	Montaigne, "To Philosophize is to Learn to Die"	SBA #6 Due
Finals	4/27/26	M	Final Exam; 9-10:50am		Final Exam