

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy
Long syllabus, Autumn 2023

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| Instructor: | Rose Novick | Course Time: | TTh, 8:30-9:50AM |
| TAs: | Nic Jones | Course Location: | Gowen 301 |
| | Julia Pelger | Office Hours: | Th, 2:30-4:30PM |
| | Tobias Romein | Office (Novick): | Savery M-392 (floor 3M) |
| | Norman Trushaev | Email: | amnovick@uw.edu |

1. Course description

Philosophy, in its most basic form, involves stopping to reflect on what one is doing: Why am I doing it? Should I be doing it? Could I be doing it better? Philosophical reflection is frequently occasioned when something we normally take for granted breaks down – at this point, we can no longer take it for granted, but must *reflect* on it. In this sense, everyone does philosophy *sometimes*, but not everyone does it *consciously, regularly, or rigorously*. This class, as an introduction to philosophy, aims to help you recognize the philosophical issues that will inevitably arise in your lives, and to equip you to address them. To this end, we will spend the quarter considering two concepts that we all rely on in our lives, but which are more complex than we often realize: ‘freedom’ and ‘death’. We will consider these complexities by reading and discussing primary texts from various of the world’s philosophical traditions.

2. Course texts

- (required) Plato (tr. Brann, Kalkavage, and Salem), *Meno* ([Hackett Publishing](#), \$11)

This text will be available from the bookstore; you will need it by October 3.

All other required readings will be posted to the course Canvas page.

3. Grading system

Each assignment is worth a set number of points, summing to 100. Your total points received will be converted to a grade between 0 and 4.0 according to the following scale:

| | | |
|-----------------|----------|------------|
| A-range: | 4.0: 95+ | 3.5: 90 |
| B-range: | 3.0: 85 | 2.5: 80 |
| C-range: | 2.0: 75 | 1.5: 70 |
| D-range: | 1.0: 65 | 0.7: 60-62 |

The minimum passing grade is 60pts. Each point you earn (above 62pts, up to 95pts) adds 0.1pts to your final grade.

4. Assignments

Discussion prep (10 points). Course readings will have a devoted lecture (TTh) and discussion section (WF). For the discussion sections, there will be a short discussion prep assignment that will be used in sections. **Eighteen** assigned, complete fifteen for full credit. *Graded for completion.*

Initial writing assignment (5 points). You will turn in an initial writing assignment on October 06, in which you will provide an initial answer to the questions “what is freedom?” and “is it bad to die?”. Graded for completion, so long as basic guidelines are met. **Purpose:** establish a starting position, to revisit at the end of each unit.

Argument evaluations (34 points; 2 x 7 points, 2 x 10 points). For each unit, you must complete **two** argument evaluation assignments. These will ask you to summarize the thesis and argument of a course reading in your own words, then provide and explain an objection to that argument. The argument evaluations for the second unit will be worth more points, in the expectation that you will get better at them as you go. Each will be less than a page.

Short paper #1 (23 points; 3 point outline + 20 point paper). For the first unit, on freedom, you will write a short paper (700-900 words; appr. 2-3 pages), in which you will defend your own position in dialogue with the course readings. You will be required to write your paper on a topic connected to one of your argument evaluations, and you will be required to make an outline for the paper (graded for completion). The outline will be used in discussion sections; attendance will be required for full credit.

Short paper #2 (28 points; 3 point outline + 25 point paper). Same as short paper #1, but for the second unit (death) and worth slightly more.

5. Grading policies

Extensions. For the *initial writing assignment*, the *argument evaluations*, and the *first short paper*, you may take an extension of **up to three days**, no questions asked; longer extensions must be requested *in advance*. For the *second short paper paper*, short extensions will be available, but must be requested. Extensions are not available for the *discussion prep assignments*.

Late assignments. If no extension has been granted, a late penalty of **0.5pts/day** will be assessed (up to a maximum of -3 points). This applies to *all assignments except discussion prep assignments*; because the purpose of section assignments is to help you prep for discussion, they **must** be turned in by the start of section to receive credit.

Regrade requests. If you do not understand why a particular assignment received a particular grade, you are encouraged to attend your TA's office hours to discuss it. If, after doing so, you are still concerned, you may ask me to regrade your assignment. If you choose this option, I will discard the old grade and regrade your assignment from scratch. *The grade I assign is final, and may be higher or lower than your initial grade.*

6. Reading Schedule

| Date | Topic | Required Readings <i>due before discussion section</i> | Assignments <i>due on specified dates</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| <i>Unit 1: Introduction, Meno</i> | | | |
| Week 1 Sep 28 | Introduction | <i>No reading</i> | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 2 Oct 03 | What is philosophy? | Plato, <i>Meno</i> pp. 1-34 (70A-87C) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 2 Oct 05 | | Plato, <i>Meno</i> pp. 34-55 (87C-100B) | Initial writing assignment (due Sunday, Oct 08) |
| <i>Unit 2: Freedom</i> | | | |
| Week 3 Oct 10 | Free will | Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity" (selection) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 3 Oct 12 | | van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism" | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 4 Oct 17 | Freedom and slavery | Epictetus, "On Freedom" (selection) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 4 Oct 19 | | Malcolm X, "Prospects for Freedom in 1965" | Argument evaluation #1 (due Sunday, Oct 22) |
| Week 5 Oct 24 | Freedom and others | Zhuangzi, "Free and Easy Wandering" | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 5 Oct 26 | | De Beauvoir, "Personal Freedom and Others" (selection) | Argument evaluation #2 (due Sunday, Oct 29) |
| Week 6 Oct 31 | Free speech | Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> (selection) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 6 Nov 02 | | Feyerabend, "How to Defend Society Against Science" | Short paper #1 outline (due Friday, Nov 03) |

| Date | Topic | Required Readings <i>due before discussion section</i> | Assignments <i>due on specified dates</i> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Unit 3: Death</i> | | | |
| Week 7 Nov 07 | Is it bad to die? | Lucretius, <i>On the Nature of Things</i> (Selection) | Short paper #1 (due Monday, Nov 06) |
| Week 7 Nov 09 | | Nagel, "Death" | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 8 Nov 14 | Would it be good to live forever? | Williams, "The Makropulos Case" (selection) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 8 Nov 16 | | Fischer, "Why Immortality Is Not So Bad" | Argument evaluation #3 (due Sunday, Nov 19) |
| Week 9 Nov 21 | Is it good to live at all? | Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World" | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 9 Nov 23 | | NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING | |
| Week 10 Nov 28 | | Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (selection) | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 10 Nov 30 | Death and grief | Plutarch, "A Consolation to his Wife" | Argument evaluation #4 (due Sunday, Dec 03) |
| Week 11 Dec 05 | | Moller, "Love and Death" | <i>no assignments</i> |
| Week 11 Dec 07 | Final papers and wrap-up | <i>no readings</i> | Short paper #2 outline (due Friday, Dec 08) |
| Week 12 EXAMS | <i>NO FINAL EXAM</i> | | SHORT PAPER #2 DUE WED, DEC 13 |

7. Further course policies

Disability and accommodation policy. It is my intention that this course be made accessible to all students. This means, minimally, that I will grant any accommodations required by the Disability Resources Center. However, some of you may need accommodations not formally certified by that office. If any aspect of the class poses a hardship for you, please talk to me, and we can work together to develop a plan for you to fulfill the course requirements.

Course etiquette. Philosophy is a social endeavor, and much of our class time will be devoted to discussion. You are encouraged to disagree with each other, but must do so respectfully. We will collectively determine a set of classroom discussion norms early in the term.

Group work. Group work is permitted for all assignments in this course, so long as *the final product you turn in is your own work*. In other words, you may discuss assignments with your peers, you may compare your work and give each other feedback, and so forth. However, you must write up the final assignment yourself; failure to do so is one form of plagiarism.

Plagiarism. You are expected to turn in work reflective of your own effort. I encourage you to discuss assignments with other students, but what you turn in must ultimately be your own work. You must also cite any sources that inform your work. We will talk more about expectations for this in class, and I will work with students to correct minor violations. Major violations (such as purchasing essays online) will be reported to the school's university office.

Religious accommodation. Students are entitled to reasonable accommodation for religious holidays. Accommodation requests must be made through the Office of the University Registrar Religious Accommodations [request process](#) within the *first two weeks* of the term.

UW face covering policy. As of September 9, UW mask policy is that masks are *optional, but strongly recommended* for the first two weeks of term (09/28 to 10/11), then *optional, but recommended* thereafter. You can read the full policy [here](#).