

Teaching Portfolio

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1 Teaching Statement

Teaching is one of the most rewarding parts of my life. It is a genuine joy for me to see how my teaching can be transformative. I have been privileged to witness both intellectual breakthroughs (e.g., a Concordia student expressing amazement at writing a persuasive paper on Kant's philosophy of mathematics after being daunted by Kant just eight months before) and life-altering decisions (e.g., my student at Indiana Women's Prison who turned down a transfer to a minimum-security prison due to her newly developed passion for philosophy and the lack of philosophy courses at the other prison). Such transformations are why I am devoted to the learning goal that students come away from my courses with the ability *to think philosophically*, namely, (1) to understand & analyze philosophically significant questions, concepts, and texts; and, (2) to explain & assess philosophical views and arguments. If successful, my students will not only acquire critical-thinking skills of general benefit but will also be empowered to think for themselves and be better world citizens.

Assignments, classroom time, and readings are carefully designed to help students achieve the above goals. Students progressively work on new skills that build on earlier ones, and I make sure that they are explicitly aware of these tasks and their relation to my learning goals.

This approach is best illustrated by my Introduction to Philosophy course (I present below my teaching methods for upper-level classes). On the first day of class, I explain my learning goal for them to think philosophically by describing the final exam's format, which is an analysis & critical assessment of a new short philosophical text. Students can then recognize how each course component prepares them for a distinct aspect of the final exam.

Several readings are accompanied by exercises that cultivate the skills needed for reading philosophical texts. The most basic skill of interpreting key concepts & claims is exercised by, for example, questions that guide interpretation of Sartre's claim that we are "abandoned". More advanced skills are practiced in my "reading task-papers", which provide a short passage (e.g., Regan's argument against indirect-duty views towards animals) with instructions to identify its main thesis, summarize its support, and pose interpretive or critical questions. These reading exercises guide class discussions that aim to improve reading skills further.

In-class activities have students practice further aspects of thinking philosophically. For example, a "conceptual-analysis workshop" has students attempt to devise a definition of "cute" that meets Socrates' standards for a good definition. To help students apply and thereby understand philosophical concepts, I sometimes bring in mixed media, e.g., video clips of the baseball player Curt Schilling that exhibit the existentialist concept of bad faith. To identify & analyze arguments, students work in groups, where each group has its own informal argument to formulate in explicit premises & conclusion(s). Each group presents their result to the rest of the class, and other groups have the further task of evaluating whether the argument analysis is faithful to the original informal text. In this way, students exercise critical thinking skills twice over and actively learn from each other (rather than passively listen to my explanations).

The above activities prepare students for more advanced tasks. One assignment provides students with a simple argument (e.g., a *modus tollens* from Plato's *Meno*), and the students' task is to explain possible reasons for doubting the argument's premises and to consider how a

proponent of the argument might defend those premises in response.

In each course component, such as those described above, students perform the same tasks they will carry out on the final exam, and I ensure that they are aware of this. Students can thus recognize their own progress in thinking philosophically, as well as areas for improvement.

For upper-level courses in the history of philosophy, my goal is that students not only think philosophically but also develop the capacity for *thinking historically*. By this, I include the abilities to (a) use historical context to clarify a philosopher's thought; (b) evaluate competing interpretations of a text; (c) compare a historical figure's thought with recent philosophical thinking; and, (d) value alternative approaches to philosophizing. I am dedicated to this goal because our world's present condition needs citizens who can inquire into the historical context for today's problems and who can consider, value, and assess alternative perspectives.

Over the past year, I have adapted my teaching methods to the distinct challenges of teaching upper-level courses in the history of philosophy. One challenge is that students often struggle to see how various strands of a philosopher's thought fit together. In response, I demonstrate how identifying a philosopher's motivations can shed light on a philosopher's thought as a whole. For example, an in-class close reading of Locke's Epistle to his *Essay* reveals his aim of improving discourse, and I later demonstrate how this motivation informs his rejection of innate ideas, his own theory of ideas, and his discussion of personal identity.

Another common challenge is that some students come into history classes without seeing any point to studying the thoughts of dead philosophers. I have addressed this in early-modern classes, for example, by showing how early-modern theories of sense-perception can illustrate more general models of sense-perception that are still live options today.

Since I began teaching over a decade ago, some of my earlier areas of weakness have become areas of strength. For example, my student evaluations show strengths in stimulating students' interest and promoting participation. Additionally, students often comment that I make difficult material such as Kant accessible & engaging. At the same time, I challenge students (e.g., my grading at Concordia has met policies aimed at preventing grade inflation).

My development as a teacher is the result of treating my own teaching as an on-going learning process for me, since successful teaching requires adapting to the needs of students. For example, during my first semester of teaching at Concordia University, I encountered new participation patterns from students, and I had some difficulty in keeping discussion on track. Over the course of the year, I developed techniques to address this issue, and student evaluations indicate that I have succeeded in making classroom discussion productive for all.

Teaching diverse student populations—from students at Indiana Women's Prison to many & varied international students at Concordia—has given me experience in adapting to the needs of diverse student groups. For example, Concordia's student population includes many students who take classes and work fulltime, as well as many whose primary language is not English. One measure I have taken in response is to adopt flexible options for students to gain participation credit (e.g., online discussion questions) so that both kinds of students can be actively engaged.

In sum, my teaching methods facilitate students' acquisition of the skills for thinking philosophically & historically in ways that empower them to think for themselves.

2 Teaching Experience

2.1 Visiting Assistant Professor, Union College

* Fall 2018: PHL 155, **Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century European Philosophy**

Course Description: An introduction to philosophy by way of some of the most important European philosophical works of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

Specific Focus/Texts: Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Descartes & Elisabeth's *Correspondence*, Berkeley's *Dialogues*, Pascal's *Pensées*

Class Size: 6 students

* Fall 2018: PHL 25, **Reason, Science, and Humanity**

Course Description: An examination of some of philosophy's "Greatest Hits," from some of the 17th and 18th centuries' greatest thinkers: Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We will consider questions like: Is there a God, and how could we know? Is your mind just your brain, or do you have an immaterial soul? What is free will, and are we just fooling ourselves when we think we have it? Does your subjective perception of the world correspond to how it is in reality, and how can you possibly know? Are there universal moral duties, which everyone has an obligation to follow regardless of their personal inclinations?

Specific Focus/Texts: Descartes' *Principles*, Cavendish's *Observations*, Leibniz & Clarke's *Correspondence*, Kant's *Prolegomena*, and Kant's *Groundwork*

Class Size: 11 students

2.2 Visiting Assistant Professor, Concordia University (Montreal)

* Fall 2017: PHIL 480/612, **Plato/Ancient Philosophy** (undergraduate/graduate course)

Course Description: In this course, we will examine Plato's epistemology and its development, largely focusing on the *Meno*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*. Some major themes will include the following: a) the nature of definitions and their role in philosophical inquiry; b) differing perspectives of what counts as knowledge, expertise, understanding, and similar concepts, as well as motivations for those perspectives; c) the nature of inquiry; d) the possibility of innate knowledge, particularly in the form of recollection; e) the use of hypothesis for the purposes of inquiry; f) metaphysical commitments for a theory of knowledge, e.g., Plato's Forms; g) the relationship between sense-perception and knowledge; h) the nature of false belief; and, i) what might knowledge require beyond mere true belief.

Class Size: 28 undergraduates and 3 graduate students

* Fall 2017: PHIL 374, **Kant and 19th-Century Philosophy**

Course Description: Immanuel Kant's new "critical philosophy" invigorated German philosophers to address new and traditional philosophical problems with new approaches. Kant's philosophy was so ground-breaking that it played a key role in the

developments of several intellectual movements, including Romanticism, German Idealism, Phenomenology, and Existentialism. In the nineteenth-century, three features of Kant's philosophy were particularly influential: its analysis of the cognitive subject's role in constituting our knowledge & experience, its critique of traditional metaphysics, and its emphasis on human beings' autonomy. This course will focus on these three themes of Kant's philosophy and how they were addressed by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Søren Kierkegaard.

Class Size: 38 students

* Fall 2017: PHIL 360, **Rationalism**

Course Description: The modern Western worldview began to come into its own in the 17th century. Both the Aristotelian scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages and the humanism of the Renaissance were ripe for rejection & revision due to rapid advances in the sciences, which raised new metaphysical and epistemological problems. This set the stage for René Descartes to find a certain or indubitable epistemological basis for a new metaphysical system informed by new scientific discoveries. This epistemological basis has come to be known as a form of "rationalism", roughly, the view that all knowledge—even the knowledge provided by the empirical sciences—is ultimately founded upon reason independently from any particular experience. Descartes' version of rationalism was subject to challenges from the outset, we will examine some of the challenges raised by his contemporaries, including Marin Mersenne, Antoine Arnauld, Thomas Hobbes, and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia. Partly in response to such challenges, some attempted to formulate a revised Cartesian philosophy, and we will examine one such figure, Nicolas Malebranche. Other philosophers offered compelling alternatives to the main tenets of the Cartesian philosophy, and we shall examine in depth Margaret Cavendish's case for materialism and vitalism. Others again, however, were broadly sympathetic to the fundamental tenets of the Cartesian philosophy but drew drastically different conclusions from Descartes. Most notably, Benedict de Spinoza advanced a rationalist philosophy with a drastically different metaphysical system from Descartes'. Finally, we shall consider Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's rationalism, whose idealism aimed to avoid what he perceived to be the flaws of the philosophies of Descartes, Malebranche, and Spinoza.

Class Size: 46 students

* Fall 2017: PHIL 235, **Biomedical Ethics** (*online course with TAs for grading*)

Course Description: In this course, you will learn how to think *critically* about the evolving place of medicine and medical technology in our lives, always with an eye toward the ethical aspects of these debates and situations. We will explore this emerging field in several ways. The first unit will provide both a foundation in ethical reasoning from the philosophical tradition and a grounding in the predominant set of "principles" that has emerged in biomedical ethics. We will then examine the role of Bioethics at the clinical level, where the role of traditional ethical theories is central to decision-making and to the formation of relationships in the clinical setting. The third unit of the course shifts

our focus to the particular (and particularly contentious) issues of abortion and euthanasia/physician-assisted suicide. The final unit explores the ethical implications of emerging genetic technology and research involving human subjects.

Class Size: 480 students

* Spring 2017: **Supervision of Undergraduate Research**

Armig Batmanian, Concordia Undergraduate Student Research Award: “Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its Reception in German Philosophy”

* Winter 2017: PHIL 485/607, **Kant** (cross-listed undergraduate & graduate course)

Course Description: Kant was a pivotal figure in the history of philosophy, situated at the end of the early-modern period of philosophy (which includes rationalists such as Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, as well as empiricists such as Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) and at the beginning of the several movements of modern philosophy (Romanticism, German Idealism, Continental Philosophy, and Analytic Philosophy). His *Critique of Pure Reason* is the foundational text of Kant's mature thought, and this course will focus on it and related texts. The *Critique of Pure Reason* primarily addresses epistemological and metaphysical questions, but these are often directed toward concerns in practical philosophy. Some of the key questions of Kant's book that we will address are the following: What does the human mind contribute to our experience? What are the limits of what we can know? What are the natures of space and time? What is the basis for the contemporary scientific worldview? What is the relationship between scientific knowledge and practical concerns (such as freedom, morality, and religion)? What can we know about the self? What is freedom, and what can we know about it? Can we know anything supernatural, e.g., God's existence or the afterlife?

Class Size: 17 undergraduates and 5 MA students

* Winter 2017: PHIL 360, **Empiricism**

Course Description: Early-modern philosophy has traditionally been understood as having two competing approaches to philosophical issues: rationalism and empiricism. In this class, we will study the latter approach, with a focus on the metaphysical and epistemological thought of John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. We shall focus on the following themes: the nature of ideas, knowledge, matter, substance, causation, personal identity, and God. These canonical thinkers will be contextualized in three ways. First, we shall see how their thought often arose in dialogue or in response to rationalist thinkers. Second, empiricism wasn't merely a response to rationalism, since we shall begin the course with a brief survey of how it constituted an independent line of inquiry in the works of Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and Pierre Gassendi. Third, we shall examine how non-canonical or neglected thinkers defended (Catharine Trotter Cockburn) or objected to (Lady Mary Shepherd) the thought of the traditional empiricist philosophers. Throughout the course, we shall also consider to what extent empiricism constitutes a genuinely separate approach to philosophy compared to rationalism.

Class Size: 46 students

- * Winter 2017: PHIL 235, **Biomedical Ethics** (*online course with TAs for grading*)

Course Description: See above.

Class Size: 328 students

- * Fall 2016: PHIL 374, **Kant and 19th-Century Philosophy**

Course Description: Immanuel Kant's new "critical philosophy" invigorated German philosophers to address new and traditional philosophical problems with new approaches. In the nineteenth-century, three features of Kant's philosophy were particularly influential: its analysis of the cognitive subject as central to systematizing our knowledge, its critical evaluation of metaphysics, and its emphasis on human beings' autonomy. This course will focus on these three themes of Kant's philosophy and how they were taken up by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. The main texts for this course are the following: Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

Class Size: 36 students

- * Fall 2016: PHIL 360, **Rationalism**

Course Description: This course is a study of central aspects of the work of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, covering metaphysical and epistemological issues. We shall also focus on some lost or neglected voices in the history of philosophy. Namely, we shall consider how Elisabeth of Bohemia & Margaret Cavendish offered substantive critiques of the Cartesian philosophy and how Anne Conway's monism & vitalism anticipated Leibniz's views. Texts for this course include: Descartes's *Philosophical Essays*, Spinoza's *Ethics*, Leibniz's *Philosophical Essays*, and *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*.

Class Size: 47 students

- * Fall 2016: PHIL 235, **Biomedical Ethics** (*online course with TAs for grading*)

Course Description: See above.

Class Size: 469 students

2.3 Volunteer Adjunct Instructor, Indiana Women's Prison

Note: Courses were accredited through Holy Cross College

- * Spring 2016: **Topics in Moral and Political Philosophy** (*co-taught with Mariam E. Kazanjian*)

Course Description: We shall consider philosophical questions such as the following: How should I live? What is the nature of the social order? How ought society to be organized? To engage with such questions, we will critically engage both with how philosophers in the past have addressed them and with current issues. We will begin with a survey of major moral and political theories — utilitarianism, deontology, natural-law theory, social-contract theory, and just-war theory — by considering their application to contentious issues. At the same time and continuing on into the semester, we will then

consider contentious issues including punishment, civil disobedience, racism, and drug addiction. For the last few weeks of the course, we will cover topics of the students' choosing. The final aim and assignment for the course is a term-paper that would be suitable for presentation at an academic conference.

Class Size: 6 students

* Fall 2015: **Introduction to Philosophy**

Course Description: In this course, we shall consider philosophical questions such as the following: How should I live? What can I know? What really exists? What is the human condition? To engage with such questions, we will critically engage with how philosophers in the past have addressed them. These include Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Martin Luther King, Jr. I hope that this course will foster an appreciation for philosophical thinking and cultivate critical thinking skills of general benefit. These skills include: questioning, conceptual analysis, application of ethical theories, close-reading of texts, argument identification & explanation, argument evaluation, considering alternative perspectives, and recognizing the limits to what one knows.

Class Size: 9 students

2.4 Lead Instructor, Indiana University (Bloomington)

* Fall 2014: P100, Introduction to Philosophy

Course Description: See above for the course taught at Indiana Women's Prison.

Class Size: 37 students

* Spring 2013: P100, Introduction to Philosophy

Course Description: See above.

Class Size: 27 students

* Fall 2012: P140, Introduction to Ethics

Course Description: In this course, we will address ethical questions as broad as 'How should I live?' and 'What is the nature of morality?' but also specific questions such as the following: 'Does God make things right or wrong?', 'What is justice?', 'Does it pay to be moral?', 'What makes conduct in war moral or not?' 'What is moral responsibility?', and 'What is the moral status, if any, of animals?' To engage with such questions, we will learn about and critically engage with how philosophers have addressed them. Particular attention will be given to three major systematic ethical theories: (i) the virtue theories of Plato and Aristotle; (ii) the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill; and, (iii) Kant's deontological ethics. Not only will we come to understand what philosophers have already claimed and argued, but we shall moreover engage with them by thinking critically and philosophically about their views and the ethical issues themselves. I hope that this will foster an appreciation for the philosophical study of ethics and cultivate critical thinking skills of general benefit.

Class Size: 36 students

2.5 Teaching Assistant, Indiana University (Bloomington)

Lead instructor is listed in parentheses.

- * Spring 2011: P100, **Introduction to Philosophy** (Kirk Ludwig)
Two Discussion Sections: class sizes of 17 and 20
- * Fall 2010: P100, **Introduction to Philosophy** (Gary Ebbs)
Two Discussion Sections: class sizes of 20 and 19
- * Spring 2010: P140, **Introduction to Ethics** (Matt Caldwell)
Two Discussion Sections: class sizes of 18 and 15
- * Fall 2009: P135, **Introduction to Existentialism** (Paul Vincent Spade)
Two Discussion Sections: class sizes of 22 and 23
- * Fall 2008: P105, **Thinking and Reasoning** (Chris Tillman)
Two Discussion Sections: class sizes of 17 and 18

2.6 Grader, Indiana University (Bloomington)

Lead instructor is listed in parentheses.

- * Spring 2015: P201, **Ancient Greek Philosophy** (Pieter Sjoerd Hasper)
One class: size of 55
- * Fall 2012: P343, **Classics in Social and Political Philosophy** (Allen W. Wood)
One class: size of 33

2.7 Teaching Assistant, Virginia Tech

Lead instructor is listed in parentheses.

- * Spring 2008: 1204, **Knowledge and Reality** (James C. Klagge)
Three Recitation Sections: class sizes of 19, 20, and 20
- * Spring 2007: 1304, **Morality and Justice** (Steven Daskal)
Three Recitation Sections: class sizes of 23, 25, and 25
- * Fall 2006: 1204, **Knowledge and Reality** (Joseph Pitt)
Three Recitation Sections: class sizes of 20, 21, and 24

2.8 Grader, Virginia Tech

Lead instructor is listed in parentheses.

- * Fall 2007: 2304, **Global Ethics** (Kevin Michael Klipfel)
Two classes: sizes of 38 and 41

3 Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

3.1 Quantitative Results of Student Evaluations 2017-18

Below are complete student evaluations for face-to-face courses for my 2017-18 academic year at Concordia. On request, I can provide a PDF containing all student evaluations from my full teaching history.

Lower mean scores are better! Students answered on the following scale: from “Strongly Agree” = 1 to “Strongly Disagree” = 5 for questions #1-18, and from “Excellent” = 1 to “Very Poor” = 5 for #19-20. So, a mean score of “1” is the highest possible.

	Kant (33.33% response)	Empiricism (40.91% response)	Plato (20% response)	Kant & 19th-Cent. (17.65% response)	Rationalism (32.56% response)
1. The course outline/syllabus is clear and complete (e.g., learning objectives, course topics, evaluation method).	1.17*	1.11*	1.00	1.33	1.43
2. The course material (textbook, assigned readings, etc.) is effective at explaining the subject material.	1.67	1.22*	1.00	1.33*	1.36*
3. The professor adequately covers the topics described in the course outline.	1.60	1.17*	1.50	1.33	1.43
4. The professor is well prepared for classes.	1.00*	1.17	1.25	1.33	1.14*
5. The professor clearly explains the course subject matter.	1.20*	1.22*	1.50	1.33	1.21*
6. The professor rarely arrives late, leaves early or cancels class.	1.33	1.39	1.25	1.00*	1.36
7. The professor demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter.	1.33	1.11	1.50	1.17	1.14
8. The professor is accessible to students (e.g. during office hours, after class, or by voice/e-mail).	1.50	1.39	2.25	1.67	1.14*
9. The methods used for evaluating students are clear and appropriate.	1.33	1.44	1.50	1.17*	1.43
10. The professor provides timely and informative feedback on assigned work and examinations.	2.00	2.24	1.75	1.83	2.14
11. The professor stimulates interest in the subject matter.	1.67	1.47	1.25	1.00*	1.36
12. The professor creates a climate in which you feel free to ask questions, disagree, express your ideas.	1.67*	1.17*	1.25	1.17*	1.14*
13. The professor is fair and impartial in his/her dealings with you.	1.17	1.28	1.25	1.33	1.14*
14. The professor treats all students with respect.	1.17	1.11	1.25	1.00*	1.14
15. The amount and level of work expected by the professor are appropriate.	1.33	1.17*	1.25	1.33	1.29
16. The professor makes effective use of class time.	1.50	1.17*	1.50	1.33	1.36
17. The professor is responsive to students.	1.00*	1.33	1.50	1.33	1.14*
18. Overall, I have learned a great deal in this course.	1.33	1.33	1.75	1.17*	1.29*
19. Overall, how would you rate this professor?	1.33	1.28*	1.75	1.50	1.29*
20 What is your overall rating of this course?	1.83	1.61	1.75	1.17*	1.50*

* within **top-thirty to top-ten percent** of mean scores among all humanities courses for the term

† within **top-ten percent** of mean scores among all humanities courses for the term

3.2 Quantitative Results of Student Evaluations 2016-2017

Below are complete student evaluations for face-to-face courses for my 2016-17 academic year at Concordia. On request, I can provide a PDF containing all student evaluations from my full teaching history.

Lower mean scores are better! Students answered on the following scale: from “Strongly Agree” = 1 to “Strongly Disagree” = 5 for questions #1-18, and from “Excellent” = 1 to “Very Poor” = 5 for #19-20. So, a mean score of “1” is the highest possible.

	PHIL 485 / 607: Kant (68.18% response)	PHIL 361: Empiricism (60.87% response)	PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Cent. (44.44% response)	PHIL 360: Rationalism (48.94% response)
1. The course outline/syllabus is clear and complete (e.g., learning objectives, course topics, evaluation method).	1.13*	1.11*	1.44	1.17*
2. The course material (textbook, assigned readings, etc.) is effective at explaining the subject material.	1.33*	1.32*	1.56	1.35*
3. The professor adequately covers the topics described in the course outline.	1.2*	1.21*	1.69	1.35
4. The professor is well prepared for classes.	1.07*	1.11*	1.63	1.3
5. The professor clearly explains the course subject matter.	1.2*	1.29	1.56	1.26*
6. The professor rarely arrives late, leaves early or cancels class.	1.07*	1.15	1.25	1.13
7. The professor demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter.	1.13	1.07*	1.38	1.48
8. The professor is accessible to students (e.g. during office hours, after class, or by voice/e-mail).	1.2	1.14*	1.31	1.17*
9. The methods used for evaluating students are clear and appropriate.	1.33*	1.18†	1.56	1.7
10. The professor provides timely and informative feedback on assigned work and examinations.	1.27*	1.56	1.81	1.74
11. The professor stimulates interest in the subject matter.	1.2*	1.36	1.25*	1.52
12. The professor creates a climate in which you feel free to ask questions, disagree, express your ideas.	1.07*	1.21*	1.38	1.3
13. The professor is fair and impartial in his/her dealings with you.	1.07*	1.14*	1.31	1.17*
14. The professor treats all students with respect.	1*	1.07*	1.13*	1.09*
15. The amount and level of work expected by the professor are appropriate.	1.33	1.32	1.38	1.26*
16. The professor makes effective use of class time.	1.27*	1.29	1.75	1.57
17. The professor is responsive to students.	1*	1.14	1.31	1.22
18. Overall, I have learned a great deal in this course.	1.13	1.36	1.44	1.65
19. Overall, how would you rate this professor?	1.07†	1.21*	1.5	1.48
20. What is your overall rating of this course?	1.13†	1.54	1.69	1.87

* within **top-thirty to top-ten percent** of mean scores among all humanities courses for the term

† within **top-ten percent** of mean scores among all humanities courses for the term

3.3 Qualitative Results of Student Evaluations 2016-2018

Encourages interest in the subject and student participation

- Curtis is absolutely fantastic and can make otherwise unclear writers like Kant very clear. You can see a clear passion for the subject matter that transcends the classroom and as such i feel like Curtis is a terrific source of insight. Reading is at an appropriate level for a 400 level class and the fact that he calculates participation so heavily really rewards students for being engaged. On that topic the fact that we can participate via email is wonderful as it allows me to reflect on my questions before posing them which is always a bonus and takes a lot of stress out of the class room. Curtis has been a wonderful example of a new philosophy professor, he really breathes life into seemingly boring subjects and gives us a fresh look into the subject matter. Curtis constantly discusses possible advances to be made into the field which as a prospect masters student is extremely appealing to me. On a final note i really do believe that Curtis inspires excellence and really allows students like my self the ability to thrive within really difficult subject matter. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- This professor has an exceptional talent for teaching. He is very clearly in command of the material, and his knowledge of the subject is obviously extensive, yet he is able to explain difficult concepts in a way that inspires confidence and a hunger for learning in students of all levels of ability. His compassion and care for all his students is evident in every aspect of his work, from the carefully crafted handouts he provides at every lecture, to his generous office hours and willingness to accommodate students outside of the scheduled times. His comments on papers go far beyond what I have received from any other professor and have been extremely helpful. He has made my experience at Concordia far more pleasant than it already was. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- I had no interest in the material before entering the class, but after the way you presented the material I have a new found interest in empiricism that I was not expecting ever to have! thank you Dr. Sommerlatte, this was a great class, you are a great professor (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- teaching is an art, and Dr. Sommerlatte is aware of this fact. everybody can feel his commitment to improve his teaching styles. What is very special about him is that he makes the whole class feel comfortable with the subject matter no matter how inadequate the students questions are. I will certainly take his coming classes. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- Professor Sommerlatte is very good at bringing life to the course material. Very leanient with due dates and brings enthusiasm to the class. My one comment would be to respond to emails more often, had a hard time getting responses throughout the semester. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- I appreciated how Prof. Sommerlatte listened and responded to students questions, this created an environment in which we all felt comfortable to air our misunderstandings or

difficulties in front of the class. However, given that much of the material dealt with in the course seems far from any contemporary concerns (philosophical and more generally) it would have been helpful to find ways of entering the material that would be more inspiring. The general attitude was that this material was rather irrelevant and this made it difficult to stay interested. Also, the structure of the evaluations made it so that it was possible to completely avoid dealing with some of the philosophers in the course, which I think is a bit of a shame. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)

- Dr. Sommerlatte is great! He is a professor that really finds ways to have the class engage with the material such as quizzes and offers alternatives to students who are more shy when it comes to participation. I am excited to take him again next semester! (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- The professors participation options are very convenient. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- While the subject matter wasn't quite what I was expecting, I still enjoyed it very much! Excellent professor. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)

Knowledgeable and makes difficult material accessible & engaging

- I really liked this class. The material is very difficult, and in the end I do not think I will get a stellar grade, but I feel I understand Kants project a bit more. I give the professor high marks. Not because I got an excellent grade in this class,(I don't think I will,) but because of his ability to spark interest in the class, and his amicable, but nevertheless professional, demeanor. I don't need my professors to be my best friend, but I do appreciate it when a professor interacts with all of his or her students with a degree of charity and respect. This professor has shown that he can accomplish this, while still challenging his students and retaining a degree of distance. I hope the faculty is smart enough to give him more contracts. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- Phenomenal teacher, took an incredibly convoluted and complicated work, and managed to present it in a way that both made it accessible and quite interesting to cover. Set up of the class is perfect and his understanding of Kant is truly remarkable (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- I really enjoyed the readings and the way in which they were presented: it was really easy to make connections and comparisons between authors. Class time was awesome: it was fun, challenging and exciting. I always looked forward to going to class (even on Fridays) because the atmosphere was so positive. I felt like the discussions were interesting. I really did not like to have a quiz on the same day on which the first paper was due, that was not cool. Also, the prompts were not very exciting, but I have no idea of how they could be changed into more exciting ones, so this criticism is stupid. Sorry about that. Thank you for being so available, supportive, and for giving such interesting lectures. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)

- Professor Sommerlatte throughout the entirety of the course kept me very engaged in the material. In class, and outside of class by responding to my questions and emails he has provided me with some very in depth knowledge of the text(s) that allowed me to gain an overall great understanding and interest of the material. Professor Sommerlatte's approach to the material has helped personally guide me to success in and outside of this course by steering my essay skills into something I can more, or less be proud of now. I can confidently say that Professor Sommerlatte has been a very good influence to all students in this course, and I am sure he has been a great mentor for many, as he is for myself. I feel very privileged to have been taught by such a talented and intelligent mind. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Taking this class as a follow up to last semester's sister class rationalism formed a really cohesive academic year. After both classes I really do feel like I have a better understanding of both of the subjects and more importantly their relationship to each other. However, it must be said that this entire process is facilitated by Curtis' passion for the subject matter. He really does a terrific job of presenting the subjects. He does an excellent job of weaving the class material together and giving a cohesive learning experience. My only gripe with this class was the amount of quizzes, they are all online and they do vary in difficulty however there were some which took upwards of 3 hours across two readings which seems a touch much for an online quiz. I much preferred the quiz format from the prior semester because it was simpler to do at home. I would argue that I did gain more insight from these quizzes, however I feel as if they do require a high amount of effort for a low grade impact. I do feel however that Curtis needs to be commended for his detailed paper prompts, they are extremely insightful and allow us to form a structure around our essay subjects which I feel almost no other professors do in the department. As such they allow me to really hone in on what he wants from my essay and if I lose grades it's no one's fault but my own, where with other professors there is a good amount of ambiguity. On a final note I just want to state that Curtis has been wonderful as a professor, his passion is well placed and it really transcends the classroom. I always kept up to date by email and Curtis is always extremely responsive. Seriously 5/5 professor (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Professor Sommerlatte is excellent and extremely knowledgeable about the topic he specializes in along with many others. He has been very responsive over email and accommodating for requests to meet in person to clarify any concepts that were not fully understood from the readings or class. Concordia has to do a few things: A) Re-hire him as a full time professor because we can't keep having part-time professors come and go every year - it breaks our hearts. B) Replace his laptop C) Give him a raise. D) Make sure that Professor Sommerlatte never has to teach in the Faubourg building again. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)

- Professor Sommerlatte is an ideal professor. As both a well trained philosopher as well as an excellent historian, Professor Sommerlatte is able to navigate very difficult material easily and provide historical context in order to help clarify the often obscure material. Also, it's clear that Professor Sommerlatte has an understanding of philosophy that is much broader than the historical figures that this class focuses on, and his ability to address questions from a multitude of more contemporary philosophical positions is impressive as well as helpful for students who may have interests that lie outside of the immediate course material. Pedagogically, Dr. Sommerlatte works incredibly hard to give his time to the students in his class, and is able to relay information and address confusions with ease and clarity that is difficult to find in the fields he specializes in. This was an excellent class with an excellent professor. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- The topics covered in Empiricism were very interesting and professor Sommerlatte did an excellent job at covering everything very clearly! The readings were challenging, as they were primary texts but anything that I hadn't understood on my own, the professor covered in class or was happy to answer questions. I learned a lot from this class and look forward to taking this professor again! (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- This is very difficult material and this professor has done an exceptional job of explaining it (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- I really enjoyed learning from Prof. Sommerlatte, his classes are always well prepared and I've learned lots. My only feedback would be that maybe he needs to limit the amount of questions so that they don't overshadow the course material. While questions are important, there was a lot of idle speculation that seemed to detract from the overall rhythm of the class. Overall though, it was a great class and I would definitely take another course with Prof. Sommerlatte! (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- Honestly had a really constructive sit down with Prof Sommerlatte that shaped my semester from half way point. Before that I had felt quite lost but Prof Sommerlatte helped me out quite a bit. Also I really liked the quiz structure, the only thing I wasn't a fan of was the stake in participation, granted the option to submit questions online is helpful, yet with a good chunk of our grade being 20% participation I'd like an easier way to know I can get full marks (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- Paper prompts were very helpful, provided focus which was very useful with difficult texts. Reading exercises also encouraged close, careful reading of the texts, also helpful by pointing to important passages. Excellent prof., knowledgeable and approachable. Would happily take more courses with him. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- Dr. Sommerlatte explains things clearly and engagingly, and makes everyone feel comfortable contributing, and like their point of view is being charitably and critically evaluated. He is extremely easy to talk to and knows his stuff. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)

- the syllabus was great, i learned a lot more from the material than i was expecting. prof sommerlatte was very good at explaining extremely complex and intricate philosophical systems. he writes very clear and helpful slides, in particular, i liked how he took key passages from the text and broke them down so that we could understand what the author is saying in their own words. the prof is also very good at responding to peoples questions, the quality of students in the class was quite high, and prof sommerlatte was able to engage with people comprehensively and in regards to very abstract and complicated concepts. i learned an incredible amount through writing on the course material. prof sommerlatte gave very extensive and helpful feedback on my essays, which i hugely appreciate. he was also generous enough to speak to me at length about the material, as well as related material not covered in the syllabus. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2017)
- Professor Sommerlate is able to render very difficult notions in terms that are clear and engaging, his lectures are dynamic and he manages to motivate involvement with the subject, I learned a lot more that I'd have expected from a 300 level course. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Professor Sommerlatte is a wonderful teacher. This course taught me a tremendous deal about Kant and I am extremely glad I took this course with him. The only downside is in terms of accessibility. He had to cancel his office hours a few time this semester but also there are TOO MANY students asking to see him during office hours. I find it hard to get hold of him in person. What palliates to this issue is that he is responsive to emails (but sometimes emails are not the best way to communicate something that should be said in person). Aside from that, any student in philosophy would be lucky to have him as a mentor. His knowledge of Kant is impressive and his teaching is fantastic. (PHIL 485: Kant's Epistemology, Winter 2018)
- its hard to rate a seminar on kant highly, but studying kant has been absolutely invaluable to my philosophical education. this professor does a great job explaining a difficult writer of a highly complex system, and his feedback has greatly helped my writing. (PHIL 485: Kant's Epistemology, Winter 2018)

General

- Professor Sommerlatte is an extraordinary teacher. I am thrilled to have been taught by him and genuinely feel enlightened after having taken his course. I hope he stays at Concordia as long as possible and receives the kind of job security he deserves. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- The class was very well outlined and the professor did an excellent job maintaining the subjects, their lectures and the assignments/papers. I truly enjoyed the class, especially because the teacher was so approachable, social and easy going. Overall, I really enjoyed

the class and I cannot wait to have the prof for PHIL 360, hopefully! (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)

- I really enjoyed taking Mr. Sommerlatte's course. At first I was skeptical the first few times because he seemed shy and was not clearly explaining the materials about Aristotle but then after the third week or so he was very knowledgeable and I could see as time went by that he seemed more comfortable teaching the class. I was also happy that we got to change classroom as well. He seems to be a hard grader on the papers though, and I didn't really enjoy doing the reading exercises but nevertheless I'm happy the department hired him and I look forward to taking more of his courses. He's a very nice person and extremely helpful. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- Really enjoyed this class (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017) I think Curtis is an outstanding professor, but there was something lacking about this course. I found it much less engaging than its counterpart, PHIL 360. If the issue was external to Curtis, it could be because of the nature of the material, or because the course was broken up over two days a week, but there seemed to be a lack of continuity, or clarity. It didn't always feel clear what we were talking about, or why it was relevant, and it didn't feel this way in 360 or 371. In addition, I think Curtis could have offered feedback in a more timely manner. To contextualize these criticisms, I'd like to sing Curtis praise for a moment. He has the best policies of any professor I've had. He offers plenty of his time outside of class to engage with students, which I appreciate. And I would also like to say that Curtis manages classroom dynamics well. I've noticed that he seems to be conscious of engaging women in the class. From my observation, women seem more comfortable sharing in his classes than in other classes I've taken. His classes don't feel like a boys club, and that I appreciate. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Dr. Sommerlatte is an outstanding professor. I do hope to enrol in more of his classes. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- Curtis is my favourite professor at Concordia. He goes out of his way to help students, and he has helped me learn a great deal about philosophy. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- This professor is one of the most talented teachers I have encountered in my time at Concordia (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- EXCELLENT PROFESSOR, PLEASE LET HIM STAY! (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- Curtis provides an excellent course on Kant. I just wish I had more time to read through and study all the material, especially the secondary literature. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- I want him to stay at Concordia. He is very respectful and serious working. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)

- One of the best Prof I have ever had. He knows what he is teaching. He is interested in the topic. Patient and fair grader. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- One of the best professors Ive had. Super clear about expectations and gives everyone opportunity to get the participation mark. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Very nice class. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- EXCELLENT. PLEASE LET PROF.SOMMERLATTE STAY (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Thoroughly enjoyed this class. Thanks for the great semester, Dr. Sommerlatte. I appreciate how helpful you are after class and in office hours. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- One of the best teachers I ever had. It is seriously difficult to find something to reproach him. One advice I would give is to make sure that the course schedule is respected because we have been a bit late on it during the semester, which might have caused little problems regarding paper submissions (but this is not a big deal...) Wonderful job overall !! (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- It pains me that the philosophy department has not made Curtis a permanent employee. Youre missing out on a god damn star. Bless you Curtis we all love you. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- I have no complaints about Professor Sommerlatte. As a professor and as a person, Professor Sommerlatte is so genuine and very knowledgeable. He always keeps the energy in class a good energy and was extremely helpful with understanding students needs. I will miss him! (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- Professor Sommerlatte is one of the best professors in the philosophy department. He is incredibly dedicated to his students and their learning. I would love to take a class with him again! (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- Overall I found this course very interesting. I wish we did less Descartes and Cavendish and looked more at Spinoza and Leibniz, since they are less known (at least by me). Thank you for always being very available and responsive, I greatly appreciate it. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- Excellent prof. Excellent material. It was even better because Kant is Professors Sommerlattes specialty! Great class. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2017)
- The department should keep him. He is a gain. (PHIL 480: Plato's Epistemology, Fall 2017)
- My only complaint is that I dont enjoy reading dialogues, but thats more my problem than yours. This course was the highlight of my Fridays. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)

- this professor makes class extremely enjoyable by engaging us and making sure we thoroughly understand the material (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Dr. Sommerlatte was a pleasure to have as a professor, he is kind, generous, knowledgeable, and amazing at explaining an otherwise not-so engaging subject. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- I thank you Curtis, you are probably one of the best teachers I had. You are so extremely engaging and kind to your students while showing not only that you've clearly carefully read the material your teaching but also that it is and can be interesting. Thank you. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Always a pleasure to attend your lectures, Dr. Sommerlatte. I really appreciate how you take the time to provide in-depth answers to questions in class and in office hours. Really like having the quizzes as they provide motivation to re-read key passages and go deeper than perhaps I would be inclined to otherwise. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Literally the best philosophy professor I've ever had. Possibly even the best professor of all. Very sad he won't be here to illuminate minds in the fall. Concordia should have offered him a tenure track position. THANK YOU CURTIS! (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Curtis is one of my favourite professors at Concordia. The amount of time that he devotes to class materials (syllabi, handouts, lectures) and one-on-one time with students is unprecedented. Furthermore, the atmosphere that he introduces both into the classroom and in office hours has always made me feel very comfortable asking questions and commenting, which is not very common in the department. I will be sad to see him leave, although I trust it will be for greener pastures. (PHIL 485: Kant's Epistemology, Winter 2018)

Negative / Constructive Criticism

- My only complaint is that less time could have been spent on some personal history of the philosophers in question. We were not graded on it and it offered little to nothing in understanding their philosophy. Otherwise an excellent course with an excellent professor (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- This course seems very difficult to teach. The material is incredibly dense. I think Curtis did a good job navigating it, but sometimes the class would get mired in too many questions from students. Though, over the course of the term, Curtis got better at moving through portions of the lecture before allowing questions. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- Although this has been a very good and informative course, I feel that our approach to these philosophers has been perhaps a bit dry and static. I find myself boxing in these

thinkers, in part by reducing their thinking to linear and (relatively) straightforward arguments, but also because they do not feel relevant to our thinking and living today. I know this is a very challenging thing to accomplish, especially for thinkers like Locke who themselves are quite dry, but I feel that these philosophers need to become more animated and vivified in my mind. All in all, Prof. Sommerlatte does a great job of explaining the material, but needs, I feel, to add a bit of life and variety to his classes. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)

- I gave a low rating for the course because I hate rationalism. Also he answers too many questions in class from students that are clearly just trying to kiss-ass and in turn leads (the students not sommerlatte) the class on long irrelevant tangents. Other than that, Dr. Sommerlatte did an amazing job and is a fantastic prof. Wish I had had him earlier in my degree. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- I would make only one recommendation. Prof. Sommerlatte is extraordinarily accommodating and willing to answer any and all questions asked during class time. I think class time could be better utilized, however, if he answered all of the same questions in given slots of time. Rather than stopping in the middle of an explanation or at any given time, I think it would make the material more accessible if Prof. Sommerlatte went through an argument or idea in its entirety before taking questions. I have thoroughly enjoyed my class with Prof Sommerlatte and hope he is able to stay on as a full time faculty member. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- 20% of the grade is allocated to class participation, which seems like a good idea, but translates to more than half of lecture time being taken up by question and comments from the class, which are often redundant. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- Seeing as participation in eighty percent of lectures is mandatory for all forty six students, I believe more class time should be dedicated to questions. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- Although at times interesting, some of the historical background on the philosophers (especially Descartes), could be replaced with more discussion on their positions and arguments. This is obviously a hard balance to strike and was not a major issue at all. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- I appreciate that you encourage classroom discussion, but I find it ends up allowing certain students to ramble on forever, frequently arriving far from the topic at hand. A handful of students dominate the classroom discussion and it makes other students feel uncomfortable sharing their input. Students frequently blurt out their opinions or unnecessary and useless comments / input without raising their hand. All of this I found detracted from my learning and encouraged inappropriate and non-inclusive behaviour from students which affirmed their sense of entitlement. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)

- I have suggestions regarding how we are graded. I feel like the reading quizzes are too easy, so 20% is too much weight for them for what they are. It helps because it forces you to read the text, but it only makes you read the text to find a simple answer. I think that if I had to answer a long form question, it would test my understanding better and it would encourage me to analyze the text more, it would also justify the weighting given to it. I also feel that giving 20% weighting to class participation is a bit much, I wouldn't put more than 10-15% to it because it is harder for people who don't are shy and don't like to talk in class. The emailing option definitely helps with that, but it sometimes feels out of context to ask a question later in an email, as opposed to during a discussion. That being said, I think the class participation is a good method of grading because it encourages us to engage in class and take an active part in our understanding, but I personally prefer to be graded on something more concrete than the amount of times I feel like talking. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- I appreciate that you encourage classroom discussion, but I find it ends up allowing certain students to ramble on forever, frequently arriving far from the topic at hand. A handful of students dominate the classroom discussion and it makes other students feel uncomfortable sharing their input. Students frequently blurt out their opinions or unnecessary and useless comments / input without raising their hand. All of this I found detracted from my learning and encouraged inappropriate and non-inclusive behaviour from students which affirmed their sense of entitlement. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2016)
- It is just my personal interest which might be helpful. It is better to teach the materials up to the certain point and then let the students ask their question. As during the lecture each student could interrupt the flow of your lecture. Just go through the materials and then let the students express themselves. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2016)
- the professor is nice & friendly & helpful, but his lack of experience is evident. (PHIL 360: Rationalism, Fall 2017)
- Dr. Sommerlatte needs to hold more office hours. My problem is that his office hours conflicted with other classes I had, but ESPECIALLY that there are so many people who want to meet with him (because he teaches many courses I guess) that too often he did not have enough time to meet with everyone waiting at his door. I really wished that the professor was more accessible in person (because the materials is often too lengthy to write by email) because I really wanted to excel in his class but for that I wanted to ask more help (especially to make sure I knew the materials for the paper). This is very important considering that he is really an amazing professor who has remarkable pedagogical skills, and this is why I was disappointed to not be able to meet with him more often during his office hours. Aside from this the professor is outstanding and his course was enlightening for me! (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2017)

- This course was thrilling for me. It was very challenging and this is exactly what I was looking for. The only problem is that Dr. Sommerlatte is not always accessible. It was hard for me to meet with him sometimes and there are way too many people who show up during his office hours (once a week) which makes it that he cant always meet with everyone. This was particularly frustrating for this course since the evaluations are rather stressful (papers and presentation) and since I wanted to excel in his class I really wanted to meet with him more often to make sure I understood the materials. We could not always deal by email since the material for this course is rather dense and lengthy. Other than that he is a wonderful professor and I had a blast taking this course. (PHIL 480: Plato's Epistemology, Fall 2017)
- Dr. Sommerlatte is an approachable and kind professor, his wealth of knowledge in certain areas is both enticing and rich with anticipation for any student, regardless of faculty. I enjoyed learning and discussing with Dr. Sommerlatte outside of conventional classroom settings, whether in the department itself or office or other places, it became apparent his desire to think of philosophical components as truly interpretable and lengthy concepts worth various interventions in no organized manner. It was this exciting method of philosophical discussion that encouraged me to take this course... to my great sadness, similar to his other prerequisite classes, Dr. Sommerlattes teaching fell flat, boring and practically impossible to engage with. Attending classes gleamed hardly any benefits, what was read to you from the projector screen could be replicated easily independently on your own computer. His blind marking was perhaps an honest attempt at grading fairly each of his students, but is obsession with small errors often resulted in A level papers taking B, B- or C grades, ultimately demoralizing philosophical thinkers due to their lack of a punctuation or small error in grammar. I hate to say, with all of my excitement and admiration for Curtis, his teaching left me feeling inadequate for a program I know I have excelled in and in a field I already have been welcome within through previous thoughts, papers and philosophical interventions. It is unfortunate that so many new students will take these classes and become disenchanted with the field and study of philosophy. My only suggestion is that you, Dr. Sommerlatte, in your future endeavours engage in the same impractical, unmoderated and exciting manner than you do with us all in your office hours, through the department or outside of the campus. It was in these moments that I became most excited about my field and the time I was most engaged - this style of learning without a doubt can be integrated into a class where evolutions of understanding, interpretations of traditional text and thought can once again become thrilling and important. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)
- Professor Sommerlatte is an amazing professor who conveys the materials in one of the most pedagogical ways Ive ever seen in my academic life. The only complaint I have is that too many students try to meet with him either after class or during office hours. I tried showing up 30-40 mins before his office hours and even then there were already

THREE students waiting in line. I felt I could never speak to him after class either because there was always a few people talking to him (or waiting to talk to him). However, what also makes him a phenomenal teacher is that he has a lot of empathy and he definitely supports students as much as he can. He does not mind giving extensions on assignments, and especially with me I am extremely thankful for his patience and understanding when it took me an unusually very long amount of time to complete the first paper. Students need more professors like him who can accommodate them when they are dealing with lots of personal issues slowing down productivity. One last thing, I think it would have made the class more interesting if we read Hume before Locke. Locke is terrible, and it plummeted my motivation for this class at the beginning of the semester. I was eagerly waiting to read Hume all semester long. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)

- I wish we covered the phenomena/noumena distinction more in depth. I also wish I could give more feedback about what could have been done differently, but I know too little about Kant to do so. Thank you for making even Kant interesting and enjoyable. (PHIL 485: Kant's Epistemology, Winter 2018)
- Dr. Sommerlatte is very kind and approachable, and has a firm grasp of one way of approaching Kant. However, myself and a number of other students who wished to take interpretive angles that were "outside" the box of what the professor considers true "Kant scholarship" were met with dissuasion and even some amount of derision. Besides constant unhelpful references to Kant being a "bad writer" and attacking various secondary authors on both academic and quasi-personal grounds, this led to an overall feeling in the class that one ought not contest the interpretation being put forth, and defer to handouts over reflection (very un-Kantian [A836/B864]). Nevertheless, I learned a lot about Kant scholarship - though I am left with the feeling that I could have engaged more with the text if arguments in class deferred to argumentative strength rather than canonicity. (PHIL 485: Kant's Epistemology, Winter 2018)

Other

- I wish we had an extra month to really go into the later parts of the CPR but that's hard with semester length. Maybe cutting a bit more of the intermediate material would help. I think that the mathematical principles and antinomies 2 & 4 could probably be done without. (PHIL 485/507: Kant, Winter 2017)
- The moodle quizzes are great exercises for the readings and these quizzes should be kept in the assessment list for next time. (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2017)
- In my opinion, the only reason for the slower than desirable time for feedback on essays is the unrealistic workload non-tenure-track profs are assigned (you only have to look up their course load through the "Search" button on MyConcordia.ca to find out). How

anyone can also pursue research -as is expected and necessary for future employment- is hard to imagine. (PHIL 374: Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy, Fall 2017)

- Wonderful Curtis Arms passionately flailing Engulfs us with truth (PHIL 361: Empiricism, Winter 2018)

4 Sample Course Materials

4.1 Courses I am Prepared to Teach

Introductory-Level

- * Introduction to Philosophy
- * Introduction to Ethics
- * Biomedical Ethics
- * Social & Political Philosophy
- * Philosophy of Religion
- * Introduction to Existentialism
- * Education: Why Bother?
- * Critical Thinking
- * Symbolic Logic

Intermediate-Level

- * Ancient-Greek Philosophy
- * Early-Modern Philosophy
- * Early-Modern Rationalism
- * Early-Modern Empiricism
- * Evil
- * History of Ethics
- * Kierkegaard
- * Existentialism through Literature

Advanced Undergraduate/Graduate-Level

- * Plato
- * Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*
- * Kant's Practical Philosophy
- * 19th-Century Philosophy
- * Phenomenology
- * History of Early Analytic Philosophy
- * Sartre's Phenomenology & Existentialism

For most of the above courses, a sample syllabus can be found on my website or below.

4.2 Introduction to Philosophy (taught course)

I include the following materials for the most recent time I have taught Introduction to Philosophy (Fall 2014): syllabus, course schedule, and sample paper-prompts with grading rubrics.

P100: Introduction to Philosophy

Course Goal

By the end of the semester, you will think like a philosopher:

- you will understand & analyze important questions, concepts, & texts; and,
- you will explain & critically assess answers & arguments responding to philosophical questions.

Course Description

In this course, we shall consider philosophical questions such as the following: How should I live? What can I know? What really exists? What is the human condition? To engage with such questions, we will critically engage with how philosophers in the past have addressed them. These include Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Martin Luther King, Jr. I hope that this course will foster an appreciation for philosophical thinking and cultivate critical thinking skills of general benefit. These skills include: questioning, conceptual analysis, application of ethical theories, close-reading of texts, argument identification & explanation, argument evaluation, considering alternative perspectives, and recognizing the limits to what one knows.

Learning Outcomes

To complete successfully this course's final assessment, classes and assignments will prepare you to do the following:

- A. Identify, ask, and explain the significance of philosophical questions
- B. Analyze concepts and definitions as a philosopher
- C. Analyze and interpret texts to make comprehensible key concepts and claims
- D. Identify and reconstruct arguments presented in philosophical texts
- E. Critically evaluate philosophical claims and arguments
- F. Formulate arguments and reasons in support of your own views and insights

Required Texts

Plato. 2002. *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. Second Edition. Translated by G. M. A. Grube and revised by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN: 978-0-87220-633-5.

Russell, Bertrand. 1912. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN: 978-0-87220-098-2.

Assignments

Participation Exercises

There will be 20 smaller assignments throughout the semester. Most will be exercises to accompany the reading before class, and these will only be accepted—barring any emergencies—in-class on the day of the assigned reading. Others will be in-class exercises, and hence will also require your presence in class. Each assignment will be equally weighted. They will be graded with the following rubric:

√++ (100% credit)	√+ (85% credit)	√ (65% credit)	0 (0% credit)
Terrific: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• responds fully to prompt• explains main points; provides clear & developed ideas	Very good: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• responds fully to prompt• identifies major points; unclear or underdeveloped ideas	Needs work: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• responds only partially to prompt• fails to identify major points; very unclear; no development of ideas	Failing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incomplete• Off topic

Task-Papers

There will be five “task-papers”, i.e. papers in which you exercise various tasks that are involved in philosophical thinking. Mastery of each of these tasks will be expected on the final exam, so these papers must be taken seriously. There will be three kinds of task-papers. The first focuses on *conceptual analysis*, testing you to understand, apply, and critically think about Socratic definitions. The second focuses on *reading*, requiring that you summarize difficult philosophical texts and ask critical questions. The third focuses on *reasoning*, requiring that you critically assess philosophical arguments. For each of these three types of task papers, I shall provide a grading rubric with the assignment’s instructions.

Final Exam

Your task during the final exam will be to think philosophically by critically examining a new philosophical text of roughly 1-2 pages in length. You will write an essay in which you perform five tasks, corresponding to skills we have focused on throughout the semester. Namely, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) identify the main question addressed in the passage and explain its philosophical importance;
- 2) analyze and explain the meaning of key concepts in the passage;
- 3) identify and explain the passage’s main conclusion and argument for that conclusion;
- 4) critically examine that argument and its premises, while considering how the author of the passage might respond to criticisms; and,

5) articulate whether you think the argument is good, giving reasons in support of your final assessment.

Earlier assignments in the course will prepare you for the final exam by homing in on the specific skills that will be demanded of you. Additionally, we shall have a mock exam in class the week prior to finals week.

To give you a sense of my expectations for what you should be able to do by the end of the course, I provide my grading rubric for the final exam at the end of the syllabus.

Submission Rules, Late Penalties, Postponement, and Rescheduling of Assignments

Submission Rules: Papers are to be submitted **through Canvas by 9:00 a.m. of the due date** (note that this is 30 minutes *before* class starts). Instructions for submitting to Canvas will be distributed along with the assignment instructions.

Late Penalties: The penalty for papers that are turned in late is *one letter grade per day*. That is, for a paper received after 9:00 a.m. of the due date but before 9:00 a.m. of the following day, there will be a penalty of one letter grade. For a paper received in the next 24 hour period after the latter time, there will be a penalty of two letter grades, and so on. *No credit* will be given for In-class Exercises, Quizzes, and Homework that are turned in late. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in cases of verified illness or emergency.

Postponement and Rescheduling: Any postponement or rescheduling of papers or exams must be requested in advance of due dates and examination times and will be granted only in cases of verified illness or emergency.

Grades

Grading Scale for Letter Grades

Papers will be marked with letter grades. The following scale will be used to calculate the numerical equivalences for determining the final grade:

A+ = 98%	B+ = 88%	C+ = 78%	D+ = 68%	
A = 95%	B = 85%	C = 75%	D = 65%	F = 0%
A- = 92%	B- = 82%	C- = 72%	D- = 62%	

Weighting of Assignments for the Final Grade

After the calculation of the above numerical equivalences, the final grade will be computed on the basis of the following weighting:

15% - Participation Assignments	10% - Conceptual Analysis Task-Paper
10% - Reading Task-Paper 1	10% - Reasoning Task-Paper 1
15% - Reading Task-Paper 2	15% - Reasoning Task-Paper 2
25% - Final Exam	

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct—including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism—will be taken very seriously in this course. It is expected that you both know and follow the code of academic conduct, which can found at the following URL:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml>

For any instances of suspected academic misconduct, I will follow the disciplinary procedures given at the following URL:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~code/bloomington/discipline/academic/index.shtml>

These procedures give a faculty member discretion in imposing an academic sanction. The standard academic sanction for academic misconduct in this course will be a **final grade of F** reported to the Registrar (see Step One of the above-cited disciplinary procedures for the status such an F has on a transcript). Finally, as required by the above disciplinary procedures, a written report of the incident will be submitted to the Dean of Students, who might impose a further university-wide sanction.

If you have any questions about these matters, e.g. what counts as plagiarism, please ask me.

Grading Rubric for Final Exam

The final exam in this course will be assessed based on the performance across the four criteria given in the left-hand column. A full letter grade will be deducted automatically for ignoring or superficially covering any of the five tasks given above.

	EXCELLENT (A+ through B+)	SATISFACTORY (B through C-)	UNSATISFACTORY (D through F)
Comprehension of Passage's Central Concepts & Claims <i>(Important)</i>	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the text's central concepts & claims; identifies key question(s) of the passage	Expresses an adequate but not thorough understanding of the text's central concepts & claims; identifies key question(s) of the passage	Exhibits a lack of understanding of the text's main concepts & claims; fails to identify key question(s) of the passage
Analysis & Interpretation of Passage's Argument <i>(Most Important)</i>	Thoroughly analyzes key concepts & questions; faithfully & clearly reconstructs the author's argument with textual support	Adequately analyzes key concepts & questions; reconstructs the author's argument but with errors, unclarity, or lack of textual support	Superficially or confusedly analyzes key concepts & questions; fails to reconstruct an argument matching the passage
Reasoning & Evaluation <i>(Very Important)</i>	Provides persuasive & detailed support for every main claim in the essay; raises creative considerations in critical assessing the passage's argument	Provides support for most but not every main claim in the essay; some reasoning lacks depth or persuasiveness	Little to no support given for major claims; most reasoning is superficial and unpersuasive
Writing <i>(Least Important)</i>	Clear & concise writing; use of simple & direct language; few to no grammatical or spelling errors	Mostly comprehensible writing but sometimes hard to follow; some unclear wording or phrasing; several grammatical or spelling errors	Writing is often incomprehensible; unclear wording and phrasing throughout; an abundance of grammatical or spelling errors

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Please note that this schedule will be revised if needed during the semester. In such a case, I will provide you with a revised schedule.

Week 1

Tue Aug 26 *Introduction*

UNIT 1: WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Skills: Philosophical Questioning and Conceptual Analysis

Thu Aug 28 *Socrates and Definitions*
Plato, *Meno*, pp. 58-70 (line numbers 70a-80d)
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DISTRIBUTED

Week 2

Tue Sept 2 *Workshop on Reading Texts*
Plato, *Euthyphro*, pp. 1-20

Thu Sept 4 *In-Class Peer Review*
DRAFT OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DUE

Week 3

Tue Sept 9 *Socrates' Defense*
Plato, *Apology*, pp. 21-44
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DUE
READING TASK-PAPER #1 DISTRIBUTED

UNIT 2: ETHICAL THEORIES

Skills: Reading Philosophical Texts and Applying Theories

Thu Sept 11 *Defining Justice and Virtue Ethics*
Plato, *Republic*, 327a-336a
Aristotle, "The Nature of Virtue"

Week 4

Tue Sept 16 *Utilitarianism*
Shane Gronholz, "[Introduction to Consequentialism](#)"
Jeremy Bentham, Selection from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*

Thu Sept 18 *Utilitarianism, continued*

Week 5

Tue Sept 23 *Kantian Ethics*
 Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"
 Andrew Chapman, "[Introduction to Deontology: Kantian Ethics](#)"

Thu Sept 25 *Kantian Ethics, continued*

Week 6

Tue Sept 30 *Virtue Ethics Reconsidered*
 Rosalind Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics"
READING TASK-PAPER #1 DUE

Thu Oct 2 *Existentialism*
 Jean-Paul Sartre, selection from "Existentialism is a Humanism"

Week 7

Tue Oct 7 *Existentialism, continued*
 Simone de Beauvoir, selection from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

UNIT 3: METAPHYSICS**Skills: Reading Philosophical Texts and Identifying Arguments**

Thu Oct 9 *What are Arguments?*
 Morton, "Sources of Conviction", pp. 35-49
READING TASK-PAPER #2 ASSIGNED

Week 8

Tue Oct 14 *Arguments for God's Existence*
 Morton, "Sources of Conviction", pp. 49-58
 Anselm, "Ontological Argument" & Gaunilo, "Reply on Behalf of the Fool"

Thu Oct 16 *Workshop on Identifying Arguments*
 Samuel Clarke, "Cosmological Argument"

Week 9

Tue Oct 21 *The Argument from Design and Objections to Arguments for God's Existence*
 Ernest Nagel, "Does God Exist?"
READING TASK-PAPER #2 DUE

Thu Oct 23 *Materialism and Dualism*
 Morton, "Materialism and Dualism", pp. 311-320; 326-332
REASONING TASK-PAPER #1 ASSIGNED

UNIT 4: EPISTEMOLOGY
Skills: Evaluating Arguments

Week 10

Tue Oct 28 *How Can I Know Anything?*
Morton on Doubt, pp. 21-27
Plato, *Meno*, 80d-86c (pp. 70-78)

Thu Oct 30 *Teaching and Learning*
Plato, *Meno*, pp. 78-92 (86c-100b)
Plato, *Republic*, "Allegory of the Cave"

Week 11

Tue Nov 4 *Appearance, Reality, and the Existence of Matter*
Russell, Chapters 1 & 2 of *The Problems of Philosophy*

Thu Nov 6 *The Nature of Matter and Idealism*
Russell, Chapters 3 & 4 of *The Problems of Philosophy*
REASONING TASK-PAPER #1 DUE

Week 12

Tue Nov 11 *Types of Knowledge and the Problem of Induction*
Russell, Chapters 5 & 6 of *The Problems of Philosophy*

Thu Nov 13 *Types of Knowledge Continued*
Russell, Chapter 7 of *The Problems of Philosophy*
REASONING TASK-PAPER #2 ASSIGNED

UNIT 5: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Week 13

Tue Nov 18 *Socrates on Civil Disobedience*
Plato, *Crito*, pp. 45-57

Thu Nov 20 *MLK Jr. on Civil Disobedience*
Martin Luther King, Jr., "[Letter From Birmingham Jail](#)"

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14

Tue Dec 2 *Special Topics in Social & Political Philosophy*
TBD (in early November, the class will vote on the topics covered this week)
REASONING TASK-PAPER #2 DUE

Thu Dec 4 *Special Topics in Social & Political Philosophy*
TBD

CONCLUSION

Week 15

Tue Dec 9 *Exam Practice*

Thu Dec 11 *Wrap-up*

Finals Week

Tue Dec 16 **FINAL EXAM: 8:00-10:00 a.m.**

Conceptual Analysis Task-Paper

Due through Canvas on Tuesday, September 9 by 9:00am

In class, we discussed three criteria for a good definition. Your goals in this assignment are to exhibit your understanding of these three requirements and to think critically on your own by attempting to define a concept. To accomplish these goals, you must perform the following tasks:

(1) State each of the three criteria for a good definition and describe/explain/elaborate in your own words. (The second criterion has two distinct aspects, so make sure to explain each.)

(2) To exhibit further your understanding of how each criterion works, construct definitions of a concept that **fail** to satisfy the criteria. This requires the following steps.

(2a) Pick **one** of the following concepts to define: 'game', 'murder', or 'chair'.

(2b) Give a definition for that concept that fails to satisfy the first criterion for a good definition, and explain why it fails to satisfy the first criterion.

(2c) For the same concept, come up with another definition that fails to meet one aspect of the second criterion, and explain why it fails.

(2d) Construct a definition of the same concept that fails to satisfy the other aspect of the second criterion, and explain why it fails.

(2e) Finally, give a definition of the same concept that does not meet the third criterion, and explain why it fails.

(3) Using the same concept you chose for (2), try to construct a definition that **succeeds** in satisfying all three criteria for a good definition. **Do not consult a dictionary, Wikipedia, or similar sources: the task is for you to think things through on your own.** You should not merely give a definition and state that it meets the criteria. Rather, you should do the following. First, give a definition that you initially think is good. Then, *pretend as if you are Socrates, poking holes in your proposed definition.* But you should not merely poke holes in your initial definition; rather *you should try to use each criticism or objection to come up with a revision to the initial definition.* After revising the definition, you should evaluate whether the new definition meets all three criteria. You might then find a new problem with the definition and revise it yet again. After revising your definition several times, you should present a final definition that, to the best of your ability, comes as close as possible in satisfying all three criteria. If you can't construct a definition that meets all three criteria, explain why you can't do any better.

The paper should be **roughly 1,000 words**. Since you are submitting it electronically, you don't need to be fussy with formatting of the text. Just make sure to make it double-spaced with normal font, font size, and margins. Please put the assignment's title and your name as the first two lines of text, i.e. not as a header or footer. Please consult the syllabus for additional course policies, e.g. those concerning lateness

Grading Rubric for Conceptual Analysis Task-Paper

	EXCELLENT (A+ through B+)	SATISFACTORY (B through C-)	UNSATISFACTORY (D through F)
Part (1): Comprehension of the three criteria for a Socratic definition (<i>important</i>)	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the three criteria; accurately presents the three criteria in one's own terms; uses creative illustrations	Expresses an adequate but not thorough understanding of the three criteria; uses language that is inapt, inaccurate, or taken directly from class to explain the three criteria; uses illustrations presented in class	Exhibits a lack of understanding of the three criteria; fails to provide illustrations
Part (2): Definitions that fail the criteria (<i>most important</i>)	Provides definitions (4 total) that clearly fail to satisfy each of the three criteria; clearly & accurately explains why each definition fails a particular criterion	Provides 1-2 definitions that don't fail the intended criteria; explains with errors or unclarity why some of the definitions fail	Fails to provide 1 or more definitions for part (2) of the assignment; definitions provided don't illustrate the relevant criteria
Part (3): Attempt to come up with a satisfactory definition (<i>very important</i>)	Makes <i>more than one</i> attempt to come up with a satisfactory definition; explains the reasoning behind the proposed definitions; offers persuasive reasons for why the final proposed definition succeeds <i>or</i> still fails (you can still get an A+ even if your final definition fails)	Makes only one attempt to come up with a satisfactory definition; unclearly or only superficially explains the reasoning behind proposed definitions; offers unpersuasive reasons for why the final proposed definition succeeds or fails	Makes no attempt to come up with a final satisfactory definition; or makes an attempt without providing any reasoning leading to or supporting the final definition
Writing & Mechanics (<i>least important</i>)	Clear & concise writing; use of simple & direct language; few to no grammatical or spelling errors	Mostly comprehensible writing but sometimes hard to follow; some unclear wording or phrasing; several grammatical or spelling errors	Writing is often incomprehensible; unclear wording and phrasing throughout; an abundance of grammatical or spelling errors

Reading Task-Paper #1 (Hursthouse)

Due on Canvas by Tuesday, September 30 at 9:00am

The selected passage for this Reading Task-Paper comes from Rosalind Hursthouse's article "Normative Ethics". For the purposes of this task-paper, all you need to focus on is Section 1 of that paper, entitled "1. Right Action".

The requirements are the following:

- (1) Write a summary/outline of approximately 100-300 words of the selected passage. The summary and outline must first **state the overall aim(s), result(s), or conclusion(s)** of the passage in the first few sentences.
- (2) To explain how the author arrives at the overall aim(s), result(s), conclusion(s), you must **divide the passage into subsections within your summary/outline**. You must offer a short summary or characterization of each subsection, making clear how it constitutes a separable step that contributes to the overall aim(s) of the passage. This will usually require making clear the transitions between subsections. There is no one right way to divide up the reading into subsections, i.e. I don't expect that you arrive at some particular number of subsections, but there are better and worse ways for dividing it up. While working on the assignment, you might find that your initial divisions are unsatisfactory, so don't be surprised if you must modify these.
- (3) Second, following the summary/outline, write a list of **at least five study or critical questions total**, organized by the subsections you give in your outline. However, you must have **at least one question per subsection** of your outline (of course, you may also have more than one question per subsection). Additionally, you must ask **at least one question concerning the passage as a whole**. You might find that these additional requirements result in more than five questions. A **good 'study question'** is one whose answer would help a careful reader to understand better the passage. Such questions include those whose answers would clarify the meanings of crucial concepts, draw out the author's assumptions, explain the author's reasoning, and so on. A **good 'critical question'** is one that challenges the assumptions, premises, or reasoning contained in the passage. Both questions should go beyond what your summary and outline state, i.e. they should not be answerable on the basis of your summary or outline. You do not need to know how best to answer the questions you submit. It is suggested that you come up with many more questions than required, and then select from these the best or most interesting ones.

Since you are submitting the paper electronically, you don't need to be fussy with formatting of the text. Just make sure to make it double-spaced with normal font, font size, and margins. Please put the assignment's title and your name as the first two lines of text, i.e. not as a header or footer. Please consult the syllabus for additional course policies, e.g., those concerning lateness.

Grading Rubric for Reading Task-Papers

	EXCELLENT (A+ through B+)	SATISFACTORY (B through C-)	UNSATISFACTORY (D through F)
Part (1): Identification of the Author's Overall Aim(s) <i>(very important)</i>	Demonstrates an accurate & thorough understanding of the author's main aim(s), result(s), and conclusion(s)	Expresses an adequate but slightly inaccurate or incomplete understanding of the author's main aim(s), result(s), and conclusion(s); uses language that is inapt	Exhibits a lack of understanding of the author's main aim(s), result(s), and conclusion(s)
Part (2): Outline divided into Subsections <i>(most important)</i>	Subsection divisions are made in a coherent way that makes explicit the structure of the author's reasoning; clearly & accurately explains the reasoning within each subsection; makes clear how all the subsections contribute to the author's main aim(s)	Subsection divisions illuminate the passage but are either somewhat unclear or incomplete; some inaccurate explanation of the subsections; makes clear how some but not all the subsections contribute to the author's main aim(s)	Fails to provide subsections; subsection divisions are incomplete; inaccurately characterizes the subsections; fails to make clear how any of the subsections contribute to the author's main aim(s)
Part (3): Study/Critical Questions <i>(important)</i>	Provides five or more questions (at least one for each subsection and at least one for the passage as a whole); <u>every</u> question goes beyond the summary and counts as either a good "study question" or a good "critical question"	Provides five or more questions (at least one for each subsection and at least one for the passage as a whole); <u>only some</u> of the questions go beyond the summary and count as either a good "study question" or a good "critical question"	Fails to provide five or more questions; fails to provide at least one for each subsection; fails to provide at least one question for the passage as a whole); none of the questions count as good "study" or "critical" questions
Writing & Mechanics <i>(least important)</i>	Clear & concise writing; use of simple & direct language; few to no grammatical or spelling errors	Mostly comprehensible writing but sometimes hard to follow; some unclear wording or phrasing; several grammatical or spelling errors	Writing is often incomprehensible; unclear wording and phrasing throughout; an abundance of grammatical or spelling errors

Reasoning Task-Paper #1 (Plato's *Meno*)

Due on Canvas or via Email by Thursday, November 6 at 9:00am

In roughly 700-900 words, write a paper addressing the following points in order.

Introduction: *Briefly* introduce the reader to the paper's topic, structure, and conclusions.

Part One: Explain the following argument that Socrates gives in the *Meno* (lines 89d-96d):

(P1) If virtue can be taught, then there are teachers of virtue.

(P2) There are no teachers of virtue.

(C) Therefore, virtue cannot be taught.

In presenting this argument, make sure to summarize briefly Socrates' main reasons for accepting (P1) and (P2).

Part Two: By means of the following steps, evaluate the first premise (P1) of the argument:

(a) Give at least two reasons for doubting (P1).

(b) Discuss whether the doubts you raise in (a) are strong enough to outweigh Socrates' reasons for accepting (P1), and decide on that basis whether you accept (P1)

Part Three: By means of the same steps as in Part Two, evaluate the second premise (P2):

(a) Give at least two reasons for doubting (P2).

(b) Discuss whether the doubts you raise in (a) are strong enough to outweigh Socrates' reasons for accepting (P2), and decide on that basis whether you accept (P2)

Part Four: On the basis of your conclusions from Parts Two and Three, evaluate Socrates' argument as a whole. Do you accept his conclusion (C)? Why or why not? Carefully summarize your reasons for accepting it or not.

Since you are submitting the paper electronically, you don't need to be fussy with formatting of the text. Just make sure to make it double-spaced with normal font, font size, and margins. Please put the assignment's title and your name as the first two lines of text, i.e. not as a header or footer. Please consult the syllabus for additional course policies, e.g., those concerning lateness.

Grading Rubric for Reasoning Task-Papers

	EXCELLENT (A+ through B+)	SATISFACTORY (B through C-)	UNSATISFACTORY (D through F)
Part One: Explanation of Socrates' Argument (<i>important</i>)	Demonstrates an accurate & thorough understanding of Socrates' reasoning for both (P1) and (P2)	Expresses an adequate but slightly inaccurate or incomplete understanding of Socrates' reasoning for (P1) and (P2); uses language that is inapt or misleading	Exhibits a lack of understanding of the Socrates' reasoning
Part Two: Evaluation of (P1) (<i>very important</i>)	Presents and elaborates on two persuasive reasons for doubting (P1); raises interesting responses in Socrates' defense	Presents two reasons for doubting (P1), but they are unclear, under-elaborated, or unpersuasive; only minimally engages in weighing the reasons for doubt with Socrates' reasons	Fails to provide two reasons for doubting (P1); reasons for doubting (P1) are merely stated but not explained; reasons are nonsensical
Part Three: Evaluation of (P2) (<i>very important</i>)	Presents and elaborates on two persuasive reasons for doubting (P2); raises interesting responses in Socrates' defense	Presents two reasons for doubting (P2), but they are unclear, under-elaborated, or unpersuasive; only minimally engages in weighing the reasons for doubt with Socrates' reasons	Fails to provide two reasons for doubting (P2); reasons for doubting (P2) are merely stated but not explained; reasons are nonsensical
Part Four: Overall Evaluation of the Argument (<i>important</i>)	Summarizes well but concisely the main points of reasoning raised in the paper; offers & explains persuasive reasons for accepting or rejecting (C)	Summarizes inadequately the main points of reasoning raised in the paper; fails to offer or explain reasons for accepting or rejecting (C)	Fails to summarize the main points of reasoning raised in the paper; only repeats the points made in the earlier sections of the paper
Writing & Mechanics (<i>least important</i>)	Clear & concise writing; use of simple & direct language; few to no grammatical or spelling errors	Mostly comprehensible writing but sometimes hard to follow; some unclear wording or phrasing; several grammatical or spelling errors	Writing is often incomprehensible; unclear wording and phrasing throughout; an abundance of grammatical or spelling errors

4.3 Introduction to Ethics (taught course)

Course Description

In this course, we will address ethical questions as broad as ‘How should I live?’ and ‘What is the nature of morality?’ but also specific questions such as the following:

- * Does God make things right or wrong?
- * Are there nothing but subjective or relative truths in morality?
- * What is justice?
- * Does it pay to be moral?
- * Is abortion morally permissible?
- * How much should one do to reduce the suffering of distant others?
- * What makes conduct in war moral or not?
- * Is torture ever morally permissible?
- * Are we morally responsible if our actions are determined?
- * What is the moral status, if any, of animals?
- * What is the role of emotion in an ethical life?

To engage with such questions, we will learn about and critically engage with how philosophers have addressed them. Particular attention will be given to three major systematic ethical theories: (i) the virtue theories of Plato and Aristotle; (ii) the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill; and, (iii) Kant’s deontological ethics. Not only will we come to understand what philosophers have already claimed and argued, but we shall moreover engage with them by thinking critically and philosophically about their views and the ethical issues themselves. I hope that this will foster an appreciation for the philosophical study of ethics and cultivate critical thinking skills of general benefit.

Required Texts

Cahn, Steven M., ed. 2011. *Exploring ethics: An introductory anthology*. Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19975-751-0.

Plato. 2002. *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. Second Edition. Translated by G. M. A. Grube and revised by John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. ISBN: 978-0-87220-633-5.

Assignments

Participation Exercises

There will be 20 smaller assignments throughout the semester. Most will be exercises to accompany the reading before class, and these will only be accepted—barring any emergencies—in-class on the day of the assigned reading. Others will be in-class exercises, and hence will also require your presence in class. Each assignment will be equally weighted. They will be graded with the following rubric:

√++ (100% credit)	√+ (85% credit)	√ (65% credit)	0 (0% credit)
Terrific: • responds fully to prompt • explains main points; provides clear & developed ideas	Very good: • responds fully to prompt • identifies major points; unclear or underdeveloped ideas	Needs work: • responds only partially to prompt • fails to identify major points; very unclear; no development of ideas	Failing • Incomplete • Off topic

Task-Papers

There will be five “task-papers”, i.e. papers in which you exercise various tasks that are involved in philosophical thinking. Mastery of each of these tasks will be expected on the final exam, so these papers must be taken seriously. There will be three kinds of task-papers. The first focuses on *conceptual analysis*, testing you to understand, apply, and critically think about Socratic definitions. The second focuses on *reading*, requiring that you summarize difficult philosophical texts and ask critical questions. The third focuses on *reasoning*, requiring that you critically assess philosophical arguments. For each of these three types of paper, I will provide a grading rubric.

Final Exam

Your task during the final exam will be to think philosophically by critically examining a new philosophical text of roughly 1-2 pages in length. You will write an essay in which you perform five tasks, corresponding to skills we have focused on throughout the semester. Namely, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) identify the main question addressed in the passage and explain its philosophical importance;
- 2) analyze and explain the meaning of key concepts in the passage;
- 3) identify and explain the passage’s main conclusion and argument for that conclusion;
- 4) critically examine that argument and its premises, while considering how the author of the passage might respond to criticisms; and,
- 5) articulate whether you think the argument is good, giving reasons in support of your final assessment.

Earlier assignments in the course will prepare you for the final exam by homing in on the specific skills that will be demanded of you. Additionally, we shall have a mock exam in class the week prior to finals week.

To give you a sense of my expectations for what you should be able to do by the end of the course, I provide my grading rubric for the final exam at the end of the syllabus.

Weighting of Assignments for the Final Grade

After the calculation of the above numerical equivalences, the final grade will be computed on the basis of the following weighting:

15% - Participation Assignments	10% - Conceptual Analysis Task-Paper
10% - Reading Task-Paper 1	10% - Reasoning Task-Paper 1
15% - Reading Task-Paper 2	15% - Reasoning Task-Paper 2
25% - Final Exam	

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Please note that this schedule will be revised if needed during the semester. In such a case, I will provide you with a revised schedule.

Key for Sources of Readings

- (CW) Available on the course website
- (EE) Cahn's *Exploring Ethics*
- (FD) Plato's *Five Dialogues*

UNIT 1: WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Skills: Philosophical Questioning and Conceptual Analysis

Week 1 *Socrates and Definitions*
Plato, *Euthyphro*, pp. 1-20 (FD)
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DISTRIBUTED

Week 2 *Divine Command Theory*
Plato, *Euthyphro*, pp. 1-20 (FD)
Steven M. Cahn, "God and Morality" (EE)

In-Class Peer Review
DRAFT OF CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DUE

UNIT 2: ETHICAL THEORIES

Skills: Reading Philosophical Texts and Applying Theories

Week 3 *Moral Relativism: Definition and the Cultural Differences Argument*
James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (EE)
CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS TASK-PAPER DUE
READING TASK-PAPER #1 DISTRIBUTED

Moral Relativism: Evaluation and Case Study
Yael Tamir, "Hands Off Clitoridectomy" (CW)
Martha Nussbaum, "Double Moral Standards?" (O)

Week 4

Virtue Ethics
Aristotle, "The Nature of Virtue" (EE)
READING TASK-PAPER #1 DUE
READING TASK-PAPER #2 ASSIGNED

Week 5

Utilitarianism
Shane Gronholz, "[Introduction to Consequentialism](#)"
Jeremy Bentham, Selection from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (CW)
John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism: What Utilitarianism Is" (EE)

Week 6

Utilitarianism: Applied to World Hunger
Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (EE)

Utilitarianism: Objections
Louis P. Pojman, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism" (EE)

Week 7

Kantian Ethics
Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics" (EE)
Onora O'Neill, "Kantian Formula of the End in Itself and World Hunger" (CW)
READING TASK-PAPER #2 DUE

Week 8

Evaluating Kantian Ethics
Correspondence between Immanuel Kant and Maria von Herbert (CW)

Virtue Ethics Reconsidered
Rosalind Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics" (CW)

Week 9

Existentialism
Jean-Paul Sartre, selection from "Existentialism is a Humanism"
Simone de Beauvoir, selection from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

UNIT 3: APPLIED ETHICS
Skills: Identifying and Evaluating Arguments

Week 10

What are Arguments?
Morton, "Sources of Conviction", pp. 35-49 (CW)
REASONING TASK-PAPER #1 ASSIGNED

- Week 11** *Socrates' Commitment to Justice*
Plato, *Crito* (pp. 45-57) (FD)
- Unjust Laws and Civil Disobedience*
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From Birmingham Jail" (CW)
REASONING TASK-PAPER #1 DUE
REASONING TASK-PAPER #2 ASSIGNED
- Week 12** *Torture*
Alan M. Dershowitz, "Should the Ticking Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured?" (O)
Henry Shue, "Torture" (EE)
Daniel J. Hill, "Ticking Bombs, Torture, and the Analogy with Self-Defense"
(EE)
- Week 13** *Moral Responsibility*
Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (CW)
Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck" (CW)
- Week 14** *Animal Rights*
Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (EE)
Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research" (EE)
REASONING TASK-PAPER #2 DUE

CONCLUSION

- Week 15** *Exam Practice and Wrap-up*

FINAL EXAM

4.4 Reason, Science, and Humanity (course in progress)

Fall Term 2018

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Office: Lamont House 104
E-Mail Address: sommerlc@union.edu (preferred form of contact)
Office Telephone: 518-388-7047
Office Hours: MWF 2:00PM-3:00PM and by appointment
Class Time: MWF 09:15AM-10:20AM
Class Location: VART (Feigenbaum Arts Center) 216

Course Description

An examination of some of philosophy's "Greatest Hits," from some of the 17th and 18th centuries' greatest thinkers: Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We will consider questions like: Is there a God, and how could we know? Is your mind just your brain, or do you have an immaterial soul? What is free will, and are we just fooling ourselves when we think we have it? Does your subjective perception of the world correspond to how it is in reality, and how can you possibly know? Are there universal moral duties, which everyone has an obligation to follow regardless of their personal inclinations? **CC: HUM**

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, a successful student will think like *a historian of philosophy*:

- (a) understand & situate the basic problems dealt with by the philosophers read;
- (b) outline & sympathetically present the motivations, ideas, & arguments of those philosophers; and,
- (c) critically evaluate these philosophers' arguments, i.e., by raising objections and recognizing whether/how someone could defend/modify the original arguments.

Texts

Cavendish, Margaret. *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy. Abridged, with Related Texts*. Edited, with an Introduction, by Eugene Marshall. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-62466-514-1. (\$10.00)

Leibniz, G. W. and Clarke, Samuel. *Correspondence*. Edited, with Introduction, by Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-87220-524-6. (\$15.00)

Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. With Selections from the Critique of Pure Reason*. Revised Edition. Edited by Gary Hatfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-521-53535-9. (\$24.00)

Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals. With an Updated Translation, Introduction, and Notes*. Edited and Translated by Allen W. Wood. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-300-22743-7. (\$10.99)

Recommended/Optional:

Descartes, René. *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Edited, with an Introduction, by Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-87220-502-4. (\$25.00)

Any readings (required or recommended) not found in these books will be provided as PDFs through Nexus.

Requirements & Grading Scheme

Assignment	Weighting
Participation	15%
Correspondence Assignment (600 words)	15%
Correspondence Assignment Reflection (300 words)	5%
Midterm Paper (2,000 words)	25%
Midterm Self-Assessment (300 words)	5%
Term Paper (3,000 words)	35%

Evaluation of Participation

It is your responsibility to be active and engaged in your education. As mentioned above, in-class lectures and discussions are crucial to achieving aims (a)-(c) of the course, especially given the course's difficult texts. Accordingly, students who skip class tend to do more poorly.

Students who do poorly on assignments and who miss class often should not expect extensive comments on their assignments, since it wastes my time to repeat my lessons.

15% of your final grade is determined by your participation. This is not based on attendance but rather on what active & valuable contributions you make to the class. Since we have many students in the class, I cannot expect that everyone will get a chance to talk in class during every class session. Accordingly, there are three forms of participation that will earn you credit:

1. In-class contributions (asking questions, making observations, raising objections, etc.)
2. Office hours (discussing the material with me)
3. E-mail (can include the following: summarizing the material, raising questions about what the author means, raising critical questions/objections against the author, etc.)

The key thing to keep in mind is that the point of grading participation is to ensure **that you are actively engaged in the course in ways that will help you learn**. Questions or comments concerning administrative aspects of the class (e.g., about due dates) do not count as valuable contributions for participation, nor do questions or comments asking me merely to repeat something I have said.

For grading participation, here is a rough outline of my criteria:

- A: you make a valuable contribution for 85% of our classes
- B: you make a valuable contribution for 70% of our classes
- C: you make a valuable contribution for 55% of our classes
- D: you make a valuable contribution for 40% of our classes

After we have completed about 1/3 of the semester, I plan to send everyone an update about where they stand with respect to participation credit, i.e., stating what grade you could expect if

you were to continue participating at the same level for the remainder of the semester.

Note on Changes to the Course

IN THE EVENT OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY'S CONTROL, THE CONTENT AND/OR EVALUATION SCHEME IN THIS COURSE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Interpretation of Letter Grades

Assignments that meet but do not go beyond requirements & expectations will receive a grade in the B-range. An assignment must significantly exceed the requirements & expectations to receive a grade in the A-range.

- **An "A" assignment is outstanding.** It meets all requirements & expectations and exceeds them in significant ways. For instance, an assignment of this quality might do one or more of the following: is exceptionally well-argued; demonstrates exceptional understanding of wider questions & scholarly significance of the issues discussed; or shows sharp philosophical insight & independent thinking.
- **A "B" assignment is very good.** It fully meets all requirements & expectations with regard to the assignment's instructions (e.g., length, content, presentation, argumentation, etc.). It shows that the student has developed a very good understanding of the assigned readings, lectures, and specific tasks of the assignment.
- **A "C" assignment is satisfactory.** It generally meets the requirements of the assignment and demonstrates adequate knowledge of the course material. But it falls short in crucial respects. For example, an assignment of this quality might: demonstrate incomplete or inaccurate understanding of the material; fail to address key concepts, arguments, or issues; lack coherence in its written or logical structure.
- **A "D" assignment is marginal.** It does not meet the requirements & expectations. It has significant flaws & gaps in knowledge of the course material, resulting in an incoherent or incomplete account of relevant material.
- **An "F" assignment is poor/failing.** It makes no attempt to meet the formal requirements or was not handed in at all. Or, the flaws & gaps in understanding are so grave that the reader cannot detect a good faith effort to engage with the course material.

Please also consult with grading rubric below. When I mark papers, I use the rubric below, assign GPA scores for each criterion relevant for the assignment, weight each score proportional to importance, and calculate an overall GPA score for the paper as a whole on that basis.

Submission Rules, Late Penalties, Postponement, and Rescheduling

- Papers are to be **submitted online 30 minutes before class on the date the assignment is due**. You are responsible for making sure the assignment is received on time.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that if you are unable to complete your work by the deadline or complete an exam on the assigned date, you must request an extension beforehand via e-mail (sommerlc@union.edu) or as soon as reasonably possible in the case of medical emergencies.
- In the case of emergencies or unusual circumstances, it is your responsibility to notify

me via e-mail (sommerlc@union.edu) as soon as possible in order to determine the course of action required for the matter at hand.

- Major assignments submitted without a granted extension is considered late and will be **penalized by 3% per day, weekends included.**
- You are responsible for keeping backup copies of your assignments, in case you lose an assignment due to unforeseen circumstances, e.g., a computer crash. It is highly recommended that you keep **multiple** backups of every assignment, and to use multiple backup types: one or more physical (USB key or backup external hard drive) and one or more in the cloud (e.g., Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive).
- You are responsible for the version of the work you submit. If you turn in the incorrect version of your work, you can resubmit the correct version prior to the deadline. If you fail to meet this deadline, I reserve the right to grade the version I originally received.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by Union College's Honor Code (muse.union.edu/honorcode). In short: **do your own work, don't lie or cheat, and give appropriate credit where it is due.**

More fully, all work submitted in this course must be your own and must be produced exclusively for this course. All your sources (whether for ideas, quotations, paraphrases, etc.) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Failure to acknowledge your sources (*whether deliberate or not*) constitutes plagiarism. All suspected violations of the honor code will be reported to the Dean of Studies, which might result in sanctions (e.g., failure of the assignment or the course; suspension or expulsion from the College).

If you have any questions regarding this policy, including, but not limited to, the requirements and appropriate methods for citing your sources, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Accommodations

It is the policy of Union College to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and wish to request accommodations to complete your course requirements, please contact the Office of Student Support Services at (518) 388-8785. Once you have received documentation from that office, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss your needs. Please be aware that no accommodations will be provided without documentation from the Office of Student Support Services.

Classroom Environment

- Come to class prepared, on time, and with the readings for the class.
- Turn off your phone, no texting, no laptops unless absolutely necessary, no newspapers, no talking to one another unless it is part of class discussion, no sleeping.
- You are expected to pay attention and engage respectfully with your classmates.
- If you must use your laptop for note taking, please be aware that **you may not use the Internet for any purpose during class** and you may wish to disable it if you will be otherwise tempted. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in loss of the privilege to use your laptop in class.
- Respectful behavior is of vital importance in the classroom (and outside of it when one's

behavior pertains to other participants in relation to the class). Discussion & engagement with the material are crucial to your success in the course. This requires respecting & listening to others, as well as engaging constructively with the course & your fellow students in class. Sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, racist, or otherwise offensive comments or language will not be accepted. Students violating these rules will be asked to leave the discussion.

Communications

- Feel free to email me any time, but allow me 24 hours to respond during the week and 48 hours during the weekend.
- If you have questions about the class, please **check the syllabus first** before emailing.
- If you cannot find it on the syllabus, then send me an email.
- If you have any questions about the content of the class or would simply like to discuss some philosophical thoughts of your own do not hesitate to come to my office hours or set up an appointment. In general, philosophical discussions are best to be had in person and not over email.

Religious Holidays and Observances

Please advise me in early in the term if you plan to take religious holidays. This will ensure that I can accommodate appropriately.

Writing Center

The Writing Center (muse.union.edu/writing-programs/make-an-appointment/) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. I encourage you to visit the writing center for any and all writing assignments.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Assigned Readings	Assignments and Recommended Readings
Week 1		
Sep. 05	Introduction	
UNIT 1: MATTER, MIND, & PERCEPTION		
Sep. 07	Descartes' Project * René Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Parts One through Three (pp. 46-60)	
Sep. 10	Descartes: Principles of Human Knowledge * <i>Principles of Philosophy</i> , Preface (pp. 222-231)	
Week 2		
Sep. 12	Descartes: Project of Doubt * <i>Principles of Philosophy</i> , Part I §§1-5 (pp. 231-232) * <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Part Four (pp. 60-61)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Meditation 1</i>
Sep. 14	Descartes: First Certainty * <i>Principles of Philosophy</i> , Part I §§6-12 (pp. 232-238) * <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Part Four (p. 61)	<u>CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN</u> <u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Meditation 2</i>
Sep. 17	Descartes: Proof of God * <i>Principles of Philosophy</i> , Part I §§13-28 (pp. 234-238) * <i>Discourse on Method</i> , Part Four (pp. 61-64)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Meditations 3-6</i> * <i>Principles I</i> §§29-75 (pp. 238-268)
Week 3		
Sep. 19	Catchup	
Sep. 21	Critical Questions about Mind-Body Dualism * Elisabeth & Descartes, <i>Selected Correspondence</i> (pp. 61-73)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Principles IV</i> (pp. 253-272)
Sep. 24	<u>DRAFT OF CORRESPONDENCE ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>	
Week 4		
Sep. 26	Cavendish: Her Project * Margaret Cavendish, <i>Observations</i> , Chapters 1-21 (pp. 3-23)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Philosophical Letters</i>
Sep. 28	CLASS CANCELLED	

Oct. 01	Cavendish: Vitalist Materialism * Reread <i>Observations</i> , Chapters 1-21 (pp. 3-23)	<u>CORRESPONDENCE</u> <u>ASSIGNMENT DUE</u>
Week 5		
Oct. 03	Cavendish: Perception * Cavendish, <i>Observations</i> , Chs. 25-31 (pp. 23-32)	<u>MIDTERM PROMPTS</u> <u>GIVEN</u>
Oct. 05	Cavendish: Thinking Matter * Cavendish, <i>Observations</i> , Chs. 35-36 (pp. 32-63)	
<u>UNIT 2: SPACE, TIME, & METAPHYSICS</u>		
Oct. 08	Leibniz & Newtonianism: The Dispute * G. W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, <i>Correspondence</i> , Introduction, 1 st Exchange (pp. 1-6) * Selections from Leibniz (pp. 88-95) * Selections from Newton's Works (pp. 95-101)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * Selections from Newton (pp. 101-110)
Week 6		
Oct. 10	Leibniz & Newtonianism: God & the Universe * Leibniz & Clarke, 2 nd Exchange (pp. 7-14)	
Oct. 12	Leibniz & Newtonianism: Space & Time * Leibniz & Clarke, 3 rd Exchange (pp. 14-22)	
Oct. 15	Leibniz & Newtonianism: Arguments * Leibniz & Clarke, 4 th Exchange (pp. 22-35)	
Week 7		
Oct. 17	Leibniz & Newtonianism: Metaphysics * Leibniz, 5 th Letter (pp. 36-66)	
Oct. 19	Introduction to Kant * Kant, Preface and Introduction to the B-Edition of the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (pp. 139-155)	
Oct. 22	Kant's Humean Problem * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , Preface (pp. 5-14)	<u>MIDTERM PAPER DUE</u> <u>TERM PAPER PROMPTS</u> <u>GIVEN</u>
Week 8		
Oct. 24	Kant: The Synthetic A Priori * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , Preamble (pp. 15-23)	
Oct. 26	Kant: The Synthetic A Priori * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , General Questions (pp. 23-31)	

Oct. 29	Kant: Metaphysics, Space & Time * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , "How is Pure Mathematics Possible?" (pp. 32-45) * Kant, "Transcendental Aesthetic" (pp. 156-160)	
Week 9		
Oct. 31	Kant: Foundations of Natural Science * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , "How is Pure Natural Science Possible?" (pp. 46-62)	
Nov. 02	Kant: Critical Metaphysics * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , "How is Pure Natural Science Possible?" (pp. 62-78)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , "How is Metaphysics in General Possible?" (pp. 79-99) * "Solution to the General Question" (pp. 116-122) * pp. 192-194
UNIT 3: REASON & HUMANITY		
Nov. 05	Kant: Duty & Morality * Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface and First Section (pp. 3-20)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"
Week 10		
Nov. 07	Kant: The Formula of Universal Law * <i>Groundwork</i> , Second Section (pp. 21-38)	
Nov. 08	Kant: Humanity & Autonomy * <i>Groundwork</i> , Second Section (pp. 38-56)	<u>Recommended Reading:</u> * <i>Groundwork</i> , Third Section (pp. 57-73)
Nov. 12	Kant: Happiness & The Limits of Ethics? * Correspondence between Immanuel Kant and Maria von Herbert	
Final Exam Period		
Nov. 19	<u>TERM PAPER DUE</u>	

Paper #1

Pick one of the following prompts and write a paper of roughly 2,000 words in length. Any modifications to the paper's tasks or choice of an alternative essay topic require approval by me. Since the paper is submitted electronically, don't be fussy with formatting the text. Please consult the syllabus for additional information, e.g., regarding extensions and late penalties.

Topic 1: Argument for God's Existence

Introduction: *Briefly* introduce the reader to the paper's topic, structure, and conclusions.

Part One: In *Principles*, Part I, §§17-18, Descartes argues that God exists. His argument aims to show that God exists because only God could be the source of my idea of God. **Your first task** is to explain this argument, making sure to identify and clarify relevant terminology and principles that Descartes appeals to. Here, you ought to consider other passages from the *Principles* (e.g., the definition of substance), the Third Meditation, and the *Discourse on Method* (pp. 61-62).

Part Two: Your second task is to evaluate the argument explained in Part One by explaining in-depth one objection (compelling reason for doubt) to Descartes' argument. **Hint:** the most productive way to evaluate this argument (especially given the relatively short length of this paper) is to raise objections to (what I called in class) the "Objective Reality Principle".

Part Three: Your third task is to evaluate whether your objection is genuinely compelling. The best way to do this is to consider how someone might defend Descartes' argument in response to your objection. Come to a conclusion about both Descartes' argument and your objection to it. (This conclusion might not be to pick a side but could amount to stating what further philosophical questions need to be answered in order to pick a side.)

Conclusion: Briefly summarize what you have accomplished in the paper.

Topic 2: Cavendish on Thinking Matter

Introduction: *Briefly* introduce the reader to the paper's topic, structure, and conclusions.

Part One: While Descartes and others held that thinking matter is not intelligible or inconceivable, Margaret Cavendish held that it is intelligible if we understand matter properly, namely in terms of her materialist-vitalist conception of matter. Your **first task** is to explain this conception of matter, focusing on how it might make the notion of thinking matter intelligible. Make sure to explain her argument(s) that all matter thinks or perceives.

Part Two: Your second task is to evaluate the arguments & views explained in Part One by explaining in-depth one objection (compelling reason for doubt) to them.

Part Three: Your third task is to evaluate whether your objection is genuinely compelling. The best way to do this is to consider how someone might defend Cavendish's arguments & views in response to your objection. Come to a conclusion about both Cavendish's arguments & views, as well as your objection. (This conclusion might not be to pick a side but could amount to stating what further philosophical questions need to be answered in order to pick a side.)

Conclusion: Briefly summarize what you have accomplished in the paper.

Topic 3: Leibniz vs. Clarke on Space

Introduction: *Briefly* introduce the reader to the paper's topic, structure, and conclusions.

Part One: In their correspondence, Leibniz attacks Clarke's Newtonian view that there is such a thing as absolute space, and he advances an alternative view that space is merely an abstract system of relations. **Your first task** is to explain each of these views and *some* of the support that each offers in favor of their view.

Part Two: Your second task is to pick one argument or view explained in Part One and then explain in-depth one objection (compelling reason for doubt) to the chosen argument/view.

Part Three: Your third task is to evaluate whether your objection is genuinely compelling. The best way to do this is to consider how a defender of the questioned argument/view might respond to your objection. Come to a conclusion about both Leibniz & Clarke's arguments & views, as well as your objection. (This conclusion might not be to pick a side but could amount to stating what further philosophical questions need to be answered in order to pick a side.)

Conclusion: Briefly summarize what you have accomplished in the paper.

4.5 Kant & 19th-Century Philosophy (taught course)

Course Description

Immanuel Kant's new "critical philosophy" invigorated German philosophers to address new and traditional philosophical problems with new approaches. Kant's philosophy was so ground-breaking that it played a key role in the developments of several intellectual movements, including Romanticism, German Idealism, Phenomenology, and Existentialism. In the nineteenth-century, three features of Kant's philosophy were particularly influential: its analysis of the cognitive subject's role in constituting our knowledge & experience, its critique of traditional metaphysics, and its emphasis on human beings' autonomy. This course will focus on these three themes of Kant's philosophy and how they were addressed by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Søren Kierkegaard.

The course will begin with Kant's most important work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which established his system of critical or transcendental philosophy. We will ease our way into this notoriously difficult work by considering its intellectual context, especially the problems with which Kant's predecessors were concerned. Kant responded to these problems by approaching them in a new way, namely by investigating the conditions necessary for the possibility of experience and by investigating whether "synthetic a priori cognition" is possible (i.e., whether we can know informative truths independently of any particular experience).

Kant carries out this project by first arguing that space and time are a priori forms of our mind's faculty of "sensibility" or intuition. He infers from this his notorious doctrine of "transcendental idealism", which holds that space and time are features only of appearances (things insofar as they are experienced by us) but not of things-in-themselves (things insofar as they exist independently of our experience of them). But Kant held that our experience involves more than the representations provided to us through our faculty of sensibility; for in our experience we also apply concepts to objects in judgments (by means of the faculty of "understanding"). Kant's next task, then, is to explain how our understanding furnishes a priori concepts that make experience possible, and thereby provide us with synthetic a priori cognition.

Kant goes on to offer a critique of traditional metaphysics, and he attempts to demonstrate further his doctrine of transcendental idealism by showing that metaphysical questions can be resolved only if we endorse this doctrine and reject the possibility of answering traditional metaphysical questions (e.g., whether God exists and whether we have free will).

Although Kant holds that, at least from a disinterested theoretical standpoint, we cannot know that we have free will, his practical or ethical philosophy places free will and autonomy at the foundation of his account of ethics or morality. And this part of Kant's view was seen by his followers as offering a path for addressing worries and problems with the details of Kant's philosophy. Accordingly, these followers held that an account of the *practical* nature of human beings is necessary to account for our theoretical knowledge.

The most prominent representative of this approach is Fichte, who initially aimed at defending the spirit of Kant's philosophy from objections common at the time. Despite defending the "spirit" of the critical philosophy, Fichte nevertheless modified the "letter" of it. Namely, he placed an even greater emphasis on human subjectivity and its practical nature. Nevertheless,

this does not necessarily result in solipsism, as we shall see how Fichte argues that a single subjectivity or mind is possible only if there are other minds.

Others were not so happy with taking subjectivity to be so fundamental and did not see it as resolving all the problems with the critical philosophy. Likewise, not all were convinced that Kant's critique of metaphysics was successful. Hegel was the most prominent of those who thought this way. His first major work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, provided a new approach to philosophical problems, one that is "dialectical" and historical. With this approach, he provides a less limited conception of reason than Kant, and he argued that it plays an immanent role in the unfolding of history. But Hegel builds on the thought of Kant & Fichte in presenting his famous "master-slave dialectic", where he provides his accounts of self-consciousness, our relation to other minds, and the role of struggle in our interpersonal relations. Despite this initially gloomy picture of interpersonal relationships, Hegel also embraced the notions of freedom and autonomy in providing accounts of morality and ethics.

Finally, Kierkegaard criticized the German-idealist tradition for over-emphasizing reason to the detriment of understanding an individual's concrete experience. In this way, he is one of the "fathers" of existentialism. Yet, he remained within the post-Kantian tradition by placing prominence of human beings' freedom and practical nature. With his own understanding of human freedom, Kierkegaard offered vivid portrayals of various lifestyles—e.g., the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—for which there is no ultimate rational basis. Likewise, he provided acute analyses of how significant psychological phenomena are rooted in the non-rational nature of human beings. Thus, Kierkegaard offers a fitting conclusion to the course by forcing us to evaluate the conceptions of reason offered by Kant, Fichte, & Hegel.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, a successful student will:

- a) understand the basic problems dealt with by Kant, Fichte, Hegel, & Kierkegaard, e.g., the nature of conscious experience, the status of metaphysics, the nature of freedom;
- b) be able to present sympathetically the ideas and arguments of these philosophers; and,
- c) be able to evaluate critically these philosophers' arguments, i.e., by raising reasons for doubt and by considering how someone could defend/modify the original arguments.

Texts

All required readings will be available electronically through the course's Moodle page. But it is highly recommended that you purchase the following for the first weeks on Kant (available through the bookstore):

[CPR] Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0-521-65729-6.

Additional recommended texts can be found via the course's Moodle page and via course reserves (either electronically or at the Webster Library).

Requirements & Grading Scheme

Assignment	Description	Weighting for Grade
Participation	I will keep a record of classroom participation. See the note below concerning what counts as participation and how participation will be evaluated.	15%
Exercise #1	The first writing exercise of roughly 1,000 words will be distributed at the very start of the course. It is designed both to test your understanding of Kant's basic definitions & distinctions in the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> and to give you a sense of how your writing will be evaluated in this course. DUE SEPTEMBER 19 AT MIDNIGHT	20%
Exercise #2	For the second writing exercise of roughly 2,000 words, you will be provided with a few possible prompts, which will ask you to carry out two tasks: i) to provide a careful but concise exegesis of an argument provided by Kant or Fichte; and, ii) to explain briefly one critical reason for doubting that philosopher's reasoning. DUE OCTOBER 24 AT MIDNIGHT	25%
Term Paper	The term paper of the course will be extended paper of roughly 3,000-3,500 words, and you will be provided with several possible prompts. Generally, you will be expected to carry out something like the following three tasks: i) to provide a careful but concise exegesis of an argument provided by one of the philosophers covered in the course; ii) to provide persuasive reasons for doubting that philosopher's reasoning; and, iii) to respond on that philosopher's behalf in response to those reasons for doubt. DUE NOVEMBER 28 AT MIDNIGHT	40%

Organization of Classroom Hours & Readings

Class sessions will combine lecture and discussion. **The aim of the lecture** is to clarify key issues, theses, and arguments in the readings. Hence, my lectures are aimed at helping you achieve aim (a) above. But this requires work from you. For each class session, I expect you to have **already done the reading assigned for that day** and to **have the reading in class**. This is crucially important since the lectures will presume familiarity with the readings and since your comprehension of the lectures and the texts is evaluated by course assignments. You should allot 3-4 hours/week for reading. Online summaries are not substitutes for the actual texts. If you want additional resources for understanding the texts, you should contact me.

The aim of classroom discussion is to have you critically engage with the texts, e.g., by attempting to interpret difficult passages or by evaluating the strength of an author's arguments. Hence, classroom discussion is practice for achieving aims (b) and (c) above, both of which aims are evaluated on assignments. Thus, active participation in classroom discussion is crucial for doing well in the course.

Evaluation of Participation

It is your responsibility to be active and engaged in your education. As mentioned above, in-class lectures and discussions are crucial to achieving aims (a)-(c) of the course, especially given the course's difficult texts. Accordingly, students who skip class tend to do more poorly.

Students who do poorly on assignments and who miss class often should not expect extensive comments on their assignments, since it wastes my time to repeat my lessons.

15% of your final grade is determined by your participation. This is not based on attendance but rather on what active & valuable contributions you make to the class. Since we have many students in the class, I cannot expect that everyone will get a chance to talk in class during every class session. Accordingly, there are three forms of participation that will earn you credit:

4. In-class contributions (asking questions, making observations, raising objections, etc.)
5. Office hours (discussing the material with me)
6. E-mail (can include the following: summarizing the material, raising questions about what the author means, raising critical questions/objections against the author, etc.)

The key thing to keep in mind is that the point of grading participation is to ensure **that you are actively engaged in the course in ways that will help you learn.** Questions or comments concerning administrative aspects of the class (e.g., about due dates) do not count as valuable contributions for participation, nor do questions or comments asking me merely to repeat something I have said.

For grading participation, here is a rough outline of my criteria:

- A: you make a valuable contribution for 85% of our classes
- B: you make a valuable contribution for 70% of our classes
- C: you make a valuable contribution for 55% of our classes
- D: you make a valuable contribution for 40% of our classes

After we have completed about 1/3 of the semester, I plan to send everyone an update about where they stand with respect to participation credit, i.e., stating what grade you could expect if you were to continue participating at the same level for the remainder of the semester.

Description of Quizzes

The quizzes are designed to help you both to identify important points in the readings and to engage philosophically with those readings. The quizzes are not timed and that you can resubmit answers for any questions. Accordingly, it is recommended that you look over the quiz questions before doing the readings, since you can then be on the lookout for the answers!

The final answer you submit for any question will be the one graded. Each quiz will be graded on a 20-point scale, and the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Each quiz will consist of five

questions with simple formats (e.g., true/false, short answer) worth 2 points each and one short essay question (generally asking for an exegesis of a short passage) worth 10 points.

Each quiz will be due on a Sunday at midnight, and it will cover the readings assigned for both the following Monday and Wednesday.

Note on Changes to the Course

IN THE EVENT OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY'S CONTROL, THE CONTENT AND/OR EVALUATION SCHEME IN THIS COURSE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution

- 1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.
- 2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is **normally** expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

Note: This is **not** a “bell curve” or a quota system, but rather a guideline clarifying at the outset the **expectations** for graded assignments in this course. Your grade will not be “reduced” or “inflated,” but rather will always be given its appropriate grade based on the descriptions below.

Letter-Grade Conversion Chart:

Outstanding		Very Good		Satisfactory		Marginal Pass		Poor/Fail	
Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%
A+	90-100	B+	77-79.9	C+	67-69.9	D+	57-59.9	F	0-49.9
A	85-89.9	B	73-76.9	C	63-66.9	D	53-56.9		
A-	80-84.9	B-	70-72.9	C-	60-62.9	D-	50-52.9		

My Interpretation of the Department and University Policy on Grades

Drawing upon the interpretation and formulation of these policies used by the current Chairperson of the Philosophy Department, here is my understanding of these policies. **The key point for you to note in the above policy is that assignments and papers that fully meet expectations and requirements will be awarded a grade in the B-range if they do not go above and beyond the requirements and expectations.** An assignment must **significantly exceed** the requirements and expectations to receive a grade in **the A-range**.

- **An “A” paper is outstanding.** It meets all expectations and requirements, but exceeds them in significant ways. For instance, a paper of this quality may do one or more of the

following: is exceptionally well-composed, well-argued and rigorous; demonstrates exceptional rigour or an exceptional understanding of the wider questions and scholarly significance of the issues discussed; shows sharp philosophical insight and ability, or independent thinking; represents substantial insight or is the result of careful reflection and research. Generally, a paper will not receive an “A” if it contains mistakes/flaws/errors in writing.

- **A “B” paper is very good.** It fully meets all the expectations and requirements with regard to deadlines, length, content, presentation, documenting references, argumentation, and so forth. It shows that the student has developed a very good understanding of the assigned readings, of the lectures, and of the specific task of the assignment.
- **A “C” paper is satisfactory.** It generally meets the expectations of the assignment and demonstrates adequate knowledge of the course material, but falls short in crucial respects. For example, the author does not demonstrate very good understanding of the material; key concepts or aspects are not mentioned; an argument lacks coherence or logical structure; the paper just gathers points without showing their relation or putting them together in a cohesive form (in developed lines of argument, reasoning, or exposition); the work is not well written and/or displays too many grammar and spelling errors, and so on.
- **A “D” paper is marginal.** It does not meet the general expectations and requirements of the assignment. While it endeavours to meet the specific criteria, it shows flaws and gaps in knowledge of the course material that prevent it from being coherent or from taking into account relevant sources, ideas, and arguments.
- **An “F” paper is poor/failing.** Work that receives an “F” makes no serious attempt to meet the formal and substantial requirements, or was not handed in at all. The flaws and gaps in understanding are so grave that the reader cannot detect a concerted effort to appropriate and use the course material.

Please also consult with grading rubric below.

Also note that when I mark papers, I assign it a letter grade. For that letter grade, I then record a percentage equivalent. My calculation of the final course grade is thus based **on percentage equivalents (not grade point equivalents)**.

Late Submissions and Extensions

- Any request for an extension must be received before the deadline or it will not be accepted, or as soon as reasonably possible in the case of an emergency medical situation in fairness to all students, there will be **no exceptions** to this policy.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that if you are unable to complete your work by the deadline or complete an exam on the assigned date, you must request an extension beforehand via e-mail (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca).
- Extensions will be granted **only** to students who are able to provide **a reasonable and verifiable medical note**. Medical notes must include dates within which you are excused from work/school. Vacations and travel plans (work-related or otherwise) are

not considered valid reasons for late submissions of or an inability to complete assignments, and exams.

- In the case of emergencies, it is your responsibility to notify me via e-mail (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca) as soon as possible in order to determine the course of action required for the matter at hand.
- Any work submitted after the deadline is considered late and will be **penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day, weekends included** (e.g., a paper whose content earns an A+ will be given a grade of A- if turned in 2 days late).
- It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignment is received before the deadline. Should you be unable to submit your work via Moodle or as a hard copy, you must submit your work via e-mail to me (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca) before the deadline. Please give yourself enough time for online submissions to send your assignments via e-mail should a technical issue arise.
- You are responsible for keeping backup copies of your assignments. That is, it is your responsibility if you lose an assignment due to unforeseen circumstances, e.g., a computer crash. It is highly recommended that you keep **multiple** backups of every assignment, and to use multiple backup types: one or more physical (USB key or backup external hard drive) and one or more in the cloud (services such as Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, CrashPlan).
- You are responsible for the version of the work you submit. If you turn in the incorrect version of your work, you can resubmit the correct version prior to the deadline. If you fail to meet the deadline, I reserve the right to grade the version I originally received.
- From the Calendar (16.3.9.2): "Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them."

Academic Integrity

You ought to be familiar with Concordia's policies regarding academic integrity, found here: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html>. Of particular note is the following:

The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "**the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement**" (Article 16a).

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism.

In Simple Words: **DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE**

QUOTATION MARKS!

For more information, see here: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/plagiarism.html> or consult with me. For this course, my policy for any detected academic dishonesty will be to report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs.

Classroom Environment

Respectful behavior is of vital importance in the classroom (and outside when one's behavior pertains to other participants in relation to the class). Discussion and engagement with the course material are crucial to your success in the course. This requires respecting and listening to others, as well as engaging constructively with the course and your fellow students in class. Sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, racist, or otherwise offensive comments or language will not be accepted. Students who fail to respect these rules will be asked to leave the discussion.

Gender-Neutral Language & Human Diversity

In support of both diversity and good philosophical thinking, it is advised that you use gender-neutral language. In this class, there are no strict rules enforced regarding gender-neutral language, but I advise consulting the American Philosophical Association's [Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language](#).

Students with Disabilities

Please contact the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) if you have a documented physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability (or if you have questions regarding your status regarding disabilities). Students with disabilities are entitled to accommodations, and if you need accommodations for this course, please contact ACSD as soon as possible:

- Address: 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., H-580
- Telephone: 514-848-2424 ex.3525
- E-mail: acsinfo@alcor.concordia.ca
- Website: <http://www.concordia.ca/students/accessibility.html>

Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively or by the instructor personally. Please contact this office immediately for assistance.

Religious Holidays and Observances

Please advise me in early in the term if you plan to take religious holidays. This will ensure that I can accommodate appropriately.

Right to Write Assignment in French

All students have the right to write assignments in French. I highly prefer that assignments be written in English, but if you would prefer to write an assignment in French, please notify me in advance so that we can work out the details.

Schedule

Week	Assigned Readings	Notes
KANT		
1 Sept. 05	Background and Kant's Copernican Revolution * Kant, Preface to the A-Edition of the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (CPR Avii-xxii; pp. 99-105) * Preface to the B-Edition (CPR Bvii-xliv; pp. 106-24)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Frederick Beiser, "The Enlightenment and Idealism"
2 Sept. 12	Synthetic A Priori Cognition * "Introduction" to the B-Edition (CPR B1-30; pp. 136-52) * The Transcendental Aesthetic (CPR B33-6; pp. 172-4)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * R. Lanier Anderson, "The Introduction to the <i>Critique</i> : Framing the Question"
3 Sept. 19	Space and Time * "The Transcendental Aesthetic" (CPR B37-66, B69-73; pp. 174-88, 190-2)	EXERCISE #1 DUE AT MIDNIGHT <u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Andrew Janiak, " Kant's Views on Space and Time on SEP " <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * Kant, <i>Prolegomena</i> , §§6-13
4 Sept. 26	The Conceptual Basis for Experience * "On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding" (CPR B116-29; pp. 219-26) * "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding" (CPR B129-43; pp. 245-52)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Allen Wood, "The Principles of Possible Experience" <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * "Metaphysical Deduction" (CPR B91-113; pp. 204-16)
5 Oct. 03	Metaphysics, Dialectic, and Freedom * First Part of the "Transcendental Dialectic" (CPR B349-98; pp. 384-410) * "The Antinomy of Pure Reason" (CPR B432-53; pp. 459-69) * "Third Conflict of the Transcendental Ideas" (CPR B472-9; pp. 484-9) * "Resolution" of the Third Antinomy (CPR B560-9, pp. 532-7)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Allen W. Wood, "The Antinomies of Pure Reason"

FICHTE		
6 Oct. 10	Fichte's Early Account of the Vocation of Man * Fichte, <i>Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation: First, Second and Third Lectures</i> (pp. 137-69)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Wayne M. Martin, "From Kant to Fichte"
7 Oct. 17	Idealism vs. Dogmatism * "[First] Introduction to the <i>Wissenschaftslehre</i> " (pp. 7-35) * "Second Introduction" (pp. 46-51, 100-1)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Daniel Breazeale, "Idealism vs. Dogmatism"
HEGEL		
8 Oct. 24	Hegel's Method and Account of Perception * Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Spirit: "Introduction"</i> (§§73-89, pp. 30-42) * "Sense-certainty or the "this" and meaning something" (§§90-110; pp. 43-54) * Summaries of "Perception" & "Force and the understanding" (pp. 55-58)	EXERCISE #2 DUE AT MIDNIGHT <u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Craig Matarrese, "Supersession and Hegelian Irony" <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * Hegel, "Preface" (Excerpts from §§1-37, 67-72, 35-66, pp. 2-29)
9 Oct. 31	Self-Consciousness * "Self-consciousness" (§§166-230; pp. 61-80)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Robert Stern, "The Dialectic of the Subject"
10 Nov. 07	From Self-Consciousness to Absolute Knowledge * "The certainty and truth of reason" (§§231-239, pp. 81-85) * "Spirit" (§§437-442, pp. 90-95) * "Religion" (§§672-683, pp. 96-101) * "Absolute Knowledge" (§§788-808, pp. 102-113)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Craig Matarrese, "The Path to Absolute Knowledge" <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * Hegel, "The certainty and truth of reason" (pp. 86-89)
KIERKEGAARD		
11 Nov. 14	The Aesthetic and The Ethical * Kierkegaard, Selection from <i>The Journals</i> * Selections from <i>Either/Or</i>	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Clare Carlisle, "Kierkegaard's Critique of Hegel"

<p>12 Nov. 21</p>	<p>Faith * Selection from <i>Fear and Trembling</i> * Selection from <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i></p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Carlisle, "Subjectivity and Truth" * C. Stephen Evans, "The Ethical as 'The Universal': Fear and Trembling" and "The Limits of the Ethical" <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * Kierkegaard, Selection from <i>Johannes Climacus</i></p>
<p>13 Nov. 28</p>	<p>Despair and Choice * Selection from <i>The Sickness unto Death</i> * Selection from <i>Upbuilding Discourses</i>, "Purity of Heart"</p>	<p>TERM PAPER DUE AT MIDNIGHT <u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Evans, "Kierkegaard's Dual Challenge to the Contemporary World" <u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u> * Kierkegaard, Selection from <i>Concept of Anxiety</i></p>

4.6 Plato's Epistemology (taught course)

Course Description

In this course, we will examine Plato's epistemology and its development, largely focusing on the *Meno*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*. Some major themes will include the following:

- a) the nature of definitions and their role in philosophical inquiry;
- b) differing perspectives of what counts as knowledge, expertise, understanding, and similar concepts, as well as motivations for those perspectives;
- c) the nature of inquiry;
- d) the possibility of innate knowledge, particularly in the form of recollection;
- e) the use of hypothesis for the purposes of inquiry;
- f) metaphysical commitments for a theory of knowledge, e.g., Plato's Forms;
- g) the relationship between sense-perception and knowledge;
- h) the nature of false belief; and,
- i) what might knowledge require beyond mere true belief.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, a successful student will:

- a) understand the basic epistemological problems dealt with by Plato, e.g., the nature of definition, the paradox of inquiry, the nature of perception, etc.;
- b) be able to present sympathetically Plato's ideas and arguments; and,
- c) be able to evaluate critically Plato's arguments, i.e., by raising objections to arguments and recognizing whether/how someone could defend/modify the original argument.

Texts

Given the number of weeks we'll devote to the *Meno* and the *Theaetetus*, it is required that you have hard copies of these texts. The recommended versions (and ones available from the bookstore) are the following:

Plato, *Meno and Phaedo*. Edited by David Sedley and Alex Long. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-67677-9.

Plato, *Theaetetus*. Translated by John McDowell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 2014. ISBN 978-0-19-964616-6.

As you know, there are many various editions of these texts available. Public-domain versions of these texts are generally unreliable. Generally, the publisher is a good guide to the reliability of a translation, and with Ancient-Greek texts, reliable publishers include Oxford, Cambridge, Hackett, Yale, and (sometimes) Penguin. But I recommend the following alternatives.

For the *Meno*, I recommend the version published in Hackett's *Five Dialogues* (ISBN 978-0-87220-633-5), since it contains fine translations of both the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* (the latter of which we'll be reading some excerpts from). For the *Theaetetus*, the alternative editions I can recommend include those published by Hackett, of which there are three versions:

- i. one translated by Jane Levett, revised by Miles Burnyeat, and edited by Bernard Williams (ISBN 978-0-87220-158-3);
- ii. the same translation accompanied by an extended & helpful commentary by Burnyeat (ISBN 978-0-915144-81-5); or,
- iii. one translated by Sophie Grace Chappell (under the name Timothy Chappell) in *Reading Plato's Theaetetus* (ISBN 978-0-87220-760-8), whose outline & commentary of the text (although excellent) might be distracting for an initial encounter of the text.

We will also be reading extensive selections from the *Republic*. I will make these selections available online, but it is recommended (both for this class and your life) that you have a hardcopy of this text too. I have placed an order with the bookstore of C. D. C. Reeve's recent translation published by Hackett (ISBN 978-0-87220-736-3), but other good editions include: G. M. A. Grube's translation (revised by Reeve) also published by Hackett (978-0-87220-136-1), and Desmond Lee's translation published by Penguin (978-0140449143).

If you consider alternative editions of any of these texts, it is highly recommended that you consult with me. And if you wish to look at the Ancient Greek, please consult with me about some of the options for doing so.

Additional recommended texts can be found via the course's Moodle page and via course reserves (either electronically or at the Webster Library). These include books not listed on the course outline, so be sure to see what I've selected (especially when writing your term paper).

Requirements & Grading Scheme

Assignment	Brief Description (see sections below for more detailed descriptions)	Weighting for Grade
Participation	I will keep a record of classroom participation. See the note below concerning what counts as participation and how participation will be evaluated.	20%
Presentation	Each week, there will be 1-2 seminar presentations by students (schedule to be determined). You will do one presentation.	20%
Paper #1	You will be expected to write a paper of roughly 2,000 words on a set topic. DUE OCTOBER 06 AT MIDNIGHT	20%
Paper #2	The term paper of the course will be extended paper of roughly 3,000 words for undergraduates and roughly 5,000 words for graduate students. You will be provided with several possible prompts. DUE DECEMBER 07 AT MIDNIGHT If you wish to submit a draft for me to review before the deadline, e-mail it to me <u>no later than midnight on November 26.</u>	40%

Organization of Classroom Hours & Readings

Class sessions will combine lecture and discussion. **The aim of the lecture** is to clarify key issues, theses, and arguments in the readings. Hence, my lectures are aimed at helping you achieve aim (a) above. But this requires work from you. For each class session, I expect you to have **already done the reading assigned for that day** and to **have the reading in class**. This is crucially important since the lectures will presume familiarity with the readings and since your comprehension of the lectures and the texts is evaluated by course assignments. You should allot 3-4 hours/week for reading. Online summaries are not substitutes for the actual texts. If you want additional resources for understanding the texts, you should contact me.

The aim of classroom discussion is to have you critically engage with the texts, e.g., by attempting to interpret difficult passages or by evaluating the strength of an author's arguments. Hence, classroom discussion is practice for achieving aims (b) and (c) above, both of which aims are evaluated on assignments. Thus, active participation in classroom discussion is crucial for doing well in the course.

Evaluation of Participation

It is your responsibility to be active and engaged in your education. As mentioned above, in-class lectures and discussions are crucial to achieving aims (a)-(c) of the course, especially given the course's difficult texts. Accordingly, students who skip class tend to do more poorly.

Students who do poorly on assignments and who miss class often should not expect extensive comments on their assignments, since it wastes my time to repeat my lessons.

20% of your final grade is determined by your participation. This is not based on attendance but rather on what active & valuable contributions you make to the class. Since we have many students in the class, I cannot expect that everyone will get a chance to talk in class during every class session. Accordingly, there are three forms of participation that will earn you credit:

1. In-class contributions (asking questions, making observations, raising objections, etc.)
2. Office hours (discussing the material with me)
3. E-mail (can include the following: summarizing the material, raising questions about what the author means, raising critical questions/objections against the author, etc.)

The key thing to keep in mind is that the point of grading participation is to ensure **that you are actively engaged in the course in ways that will help you learn**. Questions or comments concerning administrative aspects of the class (e.g., about due dates) do not count as valuable contributions for participation, nor do questions or comments asking me merely to repeat something I have said.

For grading participation, here is a rough outline of my criteria:

- A: you make a valuable contribution for 85% of our classes
- B: you make a valuable contribution for 70% of our classes
- C: you make a valuable contribution for 55% of our classes
- D: you make a valuable contribution for 40% of our classes

After we have completed about 1/3 of the semester, I plan to send everyone an update about where they stand with respect to participation credit.

Presentations

For your presentation, you will prepare a short paper (1,500-2,000 words), on the basis of which you will present for 5-10 minutes. Generally, the paper & presentation should: 1) identify significant interpretive or philosophical issues concerning an important passage from the primary text; 2) carry out a close analysis (and if appropriate, outline of the argument) of that text to shed light on the issue(s) with it; and, 3) briefly survey an interpretation presented in a relevant piece of secondary literature.

To promote classroom discussion, your paper & presentation should conclude with sharply formulated questions. These can take several forms, e.g., i) posing new & deeper questions whose answers might help address the issues presented at the start of the paper/presentation; ii) raising a reason for doubting the soundness of the primary text's argument; iii) raising a reason for doubting the strength of an interpretation in the secondary literature; and iv) suggesting alternative interpretative options or solutions. Consult with me in advance about your selected focus, passage, and secondary literature. Keep in mind that better discussion questions often require some setup, e.g., to clarify why the question is of significance. This means that better questions usually will be more than a single sentence and will instead consist of several sentences.

Post your paper to Moodle by 10am on the Wednesday before class. To post it:

- 1) have your file in docx or pdf format;
- 2) name your file as "Week XX – Surname" (e.g., if I were presenting on Week 7, my file would be called "Week 07 – Sommerlatte");
- 3) select "Shared Folder for Presentations" at the top of the Moodle course page;
- 4) select "Edit"; and,
- 5) drag-and-drop your file (in docx or pdf format) into the box containing files.

All other students in the course will be expected to read your paper before class. You can access other students' papers by selecting "Shared Folder for Presentations" and then clicking the appropriate file(s) for that week. Since everyone will be expected to have read the presentation papers before class, your presentation will consist in a synopsis of your paper of NO MORE THAN 5-10 MINUTES PRESENTATION TIME. The presentation's aims are to remind students of the paper's main points and to prompt classroom discussion via your concluding questions.

For grading purposes, the paper will be worth 15% of the final grade, and the in-class presentation/performance will be worth 5% of the final grade.

Paper #1

In a paper of roughly 2,000 words, you must carry out the following three tasks:

- i) explain what Meno's Paradox consists in;
- ii) provide a careful & concise exegesis of Socrates' response to Meno's Paradox; and,
- iii) explain briefly one critical reason that casts doubt on Socrates' response/answer.

The main point of the paper is for you to grapple with the text. Thus, although you are of course permitted to consult with and cite secondary literature, you are expected to use your own words to carry out each of the three tasks.

Paper #2

The term paper of the course will be extended paper of roughly 3,000 words for undergraduates and roughly 5,000 words for graduate students. You will be provided with several possible prompts. You must consult with me if you wish to write on a different prompt.

Generally, the following are the tasks **undergraduates** are expected to carry out:

- i) to provide a careful but concise exegesis of an argument provided by one of the philosophers covered in the course;
- ii) to provide persuasive reasons for doubting that philosopher's reasoning; and,
- iii) to respond on that philosopher's behalf in response to those reasons for doubt.

Generally, **graduate students** will be expected to perform two additional tasks, which might also be alternative tasks to (ii) & (iii):

- iv) to survey an interpretative debate in the secondary literature; and,
- v) to defend an interpretative thesis about Plato in response to the secondary literature.

Note on Changes to the Course

IN THE EVENT OF EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND THE UNIVERSITY'S CONTROL, THE CONTENT AND/OR EVALUATION SCHEME IN THIS COURSE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution

- 1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for "outstanding," "very good" and "satisfactory" work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.
- 2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is **normally** expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

Note: This is **not** a "bell curve" or a quota system, but rather a guideline clarifying at the outset the **expectations** for graded assignments in this course. Your grade will not be "reduced" or "inflated," but rather will always be given its appropriate grade based on the descriptions below.

Letter-Grade Conversion Chart:

Outstanding		Very Good		Satisfactory		Marginal Pass		Poor/Fail	
Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%	Grade	%
A+	90-100	B+	77-79.9	C+	67-69.9	D+	57-59.9	F	0-49.9
A	85-89.9	B	73-76.9	C	63-66.9	D	53-56.9		
A-	80-84.9	B-	70-72.9	C-	60-62.9	D-	50-52.9		

My Interpretation of the Department and University Policy on Grades

Drawing upon the interpretation and formulation of these policies used by the current Chairperson of the Philosophy Department, here is my understanding of these policies. **The key point for you to note in the above policy is that assignments and papers that fully meet expectations and requirements will be awarded a grade in the B-range if they do not go above and beyond the requirements and expectations.** An assignment must **significantly exceed** the requirements and expectations to receive a grade in **the A-range**.

- **An “A” paper is outstanding.** It meets all expectations and requirements, but exceeds them in significant ways. For instance, a paper of this quality may do one or more of the following: is exceptionally well-composed, well-argued and rigorous; demonstrates exceptional rigour or an exceptional understanding of the wider questions and scholarly significance of the issues discussed; shows sharp philosophical insight and ability, or independent thinking; represents substantial insight or is the result of careful reflection and research. Generally, a paper will not receive an “A” if it contains mistakes/flaws/errors in writing.
- **A “B” paper is very good.** It fully meets all the expectations and requirements with regard to deadlines, length, content, presentation, documenting references, argumentation, and so forth. It shows that the student has developed a very good understanding of the assigned readings, of the lectures, and of the specific task of the assignment.
- **A “C” paper is satisfactory.** It generally meets the expectations of the assignment and demonstrates adequate knowledge of the course material, but falls short in crucial respects. For example, the author does not demonstrate very good understanding of the material; key concepts or aspects are not mentioned; an argument lacks coherence or logical structure; the paper just gathers points without showing their relation or putting them together in a cohesive form (in developed lines of argument, reasoning, or exposition); the work is not well written and/or displays too many grammar and spelling errors, and so on.
- **A “D” paper is marginal.** It does not meet the general expectations and requirements of the assignment. While it endeavours to meet the specific criteria, it shows flaws and gaps in knowledge of the course material that prevent it from being coherent or from taking into account relevant sources, ideas, and arguments.
- **An “F” paper is poor/failing.** Work that receives an “F” makes no serious attempt to meet the formal and substantial requirements, or was not handed in at all. The flaws and gaps in understanding are so grave that the reader cannot detect a concerted effort to appropriate and use the course material.

Please also consult with grading rubric below.

Also note that when I mark papers, I assign it a letter grade. For that letter grade, I then record a percentage equivalent. My calculation of the final course grade is thus based **on percentage equivalents (not grade point equivalents)**.

Late Submissions and Extensions

- Any request for an extension must be received before the deadline or it will not be accepted, or as soon as reasonably possible in the case of an emergency medical situation in fairness to all students, there will be **no exceptions** to this policy.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that if you are unable to complete your work by the deadline or complete an exam on the assigned date, you must request an extension beforehand via e-mail (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca).
- Extensions will be granted **only** to students who are able to provide **a reasonable and verifiable medical note**. Medical notes must include dates within which you are excused from work/school. Vacations and travel plans (work-related or otherwise) are **not considered valid reasons** for late submissions of or an inability to complete assignments, and exams.
- In the case of emergencies, it is your responsibility to notify me via e-mail (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca) as soon as possible in order to determine the course of action required for the matter at hand.
- Any work submitted after the deadline is considered late and will be **penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day, weekends included** (e.g., a paper whose content earns an A+ will be given a grade of A- if turned in 2 days late).
- It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignment is received before the deadline. Should you be unable to submit your work via Moodle or as a hard copy, you must submit your work via e-mail to me (curtis.sommerlatte@concordia.ca) before the deadline. Please give yourself enough time for online submissions to send your assignments via e-mail should a technical issue arise.
- You are responsible for keeping backup copies of your assignments. That is, it is your responsibility if you lose an assignment due to unforeseen circumstances, e.g., a computer crash. It is highly recommended that you keep **multiple** backups of every assignment, and to use multiple backup types: one or more physical (USB key or backup external hard drive) and one or more in the cloud (services such as Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, CrashPlan).
- You are responsible for the version of the work you submit. If you turn in the incorrect version of your work, you can resubmit the correct version prior to the deadline. If you fail to meet the deadline, I reserve the right to grade the version I originally received.
- From the Calendar (16.3.9.2): "Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them."

Academic Integrity

You ought to be familiar with Concordia's policies regarding academic integrity, found here: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html>. Of particular note is the following:

The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "**the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement**" (Article 16a).

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original

source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism.

In Simple Words: **DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!**

For more information, see here: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/plagiarism.html> or consult with me. For this course, my policy for any detected academic dishonesty will be to report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs.

Classroom Environment

Respectful behavior is of vital importance in the classroom (and outside when one's behavior pertains to other participants in relation to the class). Discussion and engagement with the course material are crucial to your success in the course. This requires respecting and listening to others, as well as engaging constructively with the course and your fellow students in class. Sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, racist, or otherwise offensive comments or language will not be accepted. Students who fail to respect these rules will be asked to leave the discussion.

Gender-Neutral Language & Human Diversity

In support of both diversity and good philosophical thinking, it is advised that you use gender-neutral language. In this class, there are no strict rules enforced regarding gender-neutral language, but I advise consulting the American Philosophical Association's [Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language](#).

Students with Disabilities

Please contact the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) if you have a documented physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability (or if you have questions regarding your status regarding disabilities). Students with disabilities are entitled to accommodations, and if you need accommodations for this course, please contact ACSD as soon as possible:

- Address: 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., H-580
- Telephone: 514-848-2424 ex.3525
- E-mail: acsinfo@alcor.concordia.ca
- Website: <http://www.concordia.ca/students/accessibility.html>

Accommodations will not be granted retrospectively or by the instructor personally. Please contact this office immediately for assistance.

Religious Holidays and Observances

Please advise me in early in the term if you plan to take religious holidays. This will ensure that I can accommodate appropriately.

Right to Write Assignment in French

All students have the right to write assignments in French. I highly prefer that assignments be written in English, but if you would prefer to write an assignment in French, please notify me in advance so that we can work out the details.

Schedule

Week	Assigned Readings	Notes
THE MENO		
1 Sept. 07	<u>Expert Knowledge and Definitions</u> * <i>Meno</i> 70a-80d * Paul Woodruff, "Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge"	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * David Charles, "Types of Definition in the <i>Meno</i> " * William J. Prior, "Plato and the Socratic 'Fallacy'"
2 Sept. 14	<u>Meno's Paradox and the Slave-Boy Demonstration</u> * <i>Meno</i> 80d-86c <i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Gail Fine, "Meno's Questions and Socrates' Dilemma" * David Ebrey, "Review of Fine's <i>The Possibility of Inquiry</i> "	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Mary Margaret McCabe, "Escaping One's Own Notice Knowing: Meno's Paradox Again" * David Ebrey, "Meno's Paradox in Context"
3 Sept. 21	<u>The Doctrine of Recollection</u> * <i>Meno</i> 85b-86c (reread) <i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Gail Fine, "Socrates' Three-Stage Reply: The First and Second Stages" * David Bronstein, "Review of Fine's <i>The Possibility of Inquiry</i> " * Raphael Woolf, "Knowing How to Ask: A Discussion of Gail Fine, <i>The Possibility of Inquiry</i> " (Sections I-VI)	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Gail Fine, "The Third Stage: The Second Statement of the Theory of Recollection" * Whitney Schwab, "Review of Fine's <i>The Possibility of Inquiry</i>" on NDPR * Lee Franklin, "Meno's Paradox, the Slave-Boy Interrogation, and the Unity of Platonic Recollection"
4 Sept. 28	<u>The Method of Hypothesis</u> * <i>Meno</i> 86c-100c * Daniel Devereux, "Nature and Teaching in Plato's <i>Meno</i> "	<u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Hugh H. Benson, "Plato's Method of Dialectic"

	<p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Hugh H. Benson, "The Method of Hypothesis: A Preliminary Sketch" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Benson, "The Method of Hypothesis: Socrates at Work in the <i>Meno</i>" * Naoya Iwata, "Plato's Hypothetical Inquiry in the <i>Meno</i>"
THE ROLE OF THE FORMS IN PLATO'S EPISTEMOLOGY		
<p>5 Oct. 05</p>	<p><u><i>Phaedo: Recollection, Forms, and Hypothesis</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Phaedo</i> 65d-67c, 72e-79a, 95e-107b <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Michael L. Morgan, "Sense-Perception and Recollection in the <i>Phaedo</i>" 	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Terence Irwin, "The Theory of Forms" * Thomas Williams, "Two Aspects of Platonic Recollection" * Benson, "The Method of Hypothesis: Socrates at Work in the <i>Phaedo</i>"
Oct. 06	PAPER #1 DUE AT MIDNIGHT	
<p>6 Oct. 12</p>	<p><u><i>Republic: Knowledge, Belief, and Forms in Plato's</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Republic</i> Book V, 472a-480a * David C. Lee, "Interpreting Plato's <i>Republic: Knowledge and Belief</i>" <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Francisco Gonzalez, "Propositions or Objects? A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in <i>Republic V</i>" 	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sophie Grace Chappell (published as Timothy Chappell), "Varieties of Knowledge in Plato and Aristotle" * Gail Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in <i>Republic V</i>" <p><u>Supplemental Primary Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Timaeus</i> 51b-52d
<p>7 Oct. 19</p>	<p><u><i>Republic: The Sun and The Line</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Republic</i>, Book VI, 506d-511e <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Gail Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in <i>Republic V-VII</i>" 	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nicholas Denyer, "Sun and Line: The Role of the Good" * Hugh H. Benson, "Plato's Philosophical Method in the <i>Republic: The Divided Line</i> (510b-511d)" * J. H. Leshner, "The Meaning of 'saphēneia' in Plato's Divided Line"

<p>8 Oct. 26</p>	<p><u>Republic: The Allegory of the Cave and Education</u> * <i>Republic</i>, Book VII, 514a-541b</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Michael T. Ferejohn, "Knowledge, Recollection, and the Forms in <i>Republic</i> VII"</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Whitney Schwab, "Understanding <i>epistēmē</i> in Plato's <i>Republic</i>" * C. D. C. Reeve, "Blindness and reorientation: education and the acquisition of knowledge in the <i>Republic</i>"</p>
<p>THE THEAETETUS</p>		
<p>9 Nov. 02</p>	<p><u>Is Knowledge Perception?</u> * <i>Theaetetus</i> 142a-186e * Naly Thaler, "Perception and Knowledge in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>"</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Sophie Grace Chappell, "Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus" on SEP (Sections 1-6.2)</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Job van Eck, "Moving Like a Stream: Protagoras' Heracliteanism in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>" * Jane Mary Day, "The Theory of Perception in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i> 152-183"</p>
<p>10 Nov. 09</p>	<p><u>The Refutation of Protagorean Relativism</u> * <i>Theaetetus</i> 142a-186e (reread)</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Sophie Grace Chappell, "Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus" on SEP (Sections 6.3-6.7)</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * M. F. Burnyeat, "Protagoras and Self-Refutation in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>" * Fine, "Plato's Refutation of Protagoras in the <i>Theaetetus</i>"</p>
<p>11 Nov. 16</p>	<p><u>Is Knowledge True Belief? Puzzles about False Belief</u> * <i>Theaetetus</i> 187a-201c * Naly Thaler, "Judgment, Logos, and Knowledge in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>"</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Sophie Grace Chappell, "Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus" on SEP (Sections 7-7.3)</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Catherine Rowett, "On Making Mistakes in Plato: <i>Theaetetus</i> 187c-200d" * John McDowell, "Identity Mistakes: Plato and the Logical Atomists"</p>
<p>12 Nov. 23</p>	<p><u>More Puzzles and the Refutation of Knowledge as True Belief</u> * <i>Theaetetus</i> 187a-201c (reread)</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Sophie Grace Chappell, "Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus" on SEP (Sections 7.4-7.6)</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Raphael Woolf, "A Shaggy Soul Story: How not to Read the Wax Tablet Model in Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>" * Tamer Nawar, "Knowledge and True Belief at <i>Theaetetus</i> 201a-c"</p>
<p>Nov. 26</p>	<p>OPTIONAL DRAFT OF PAPER #2 DUE AT MIDNIGHT</p>	

<p>13 Nov. 30</p>	<p><u>Is Knowledge True Belief with an Account?</u> * <i>Theaetetus</i> 201c-210d</p> <p><i>Required for Graduate Students:</i> * Sophie Grace Chappell, “Plato on Knowledge in the Theaetetus” on SEP (Sections 8-9)</p>	<p><u>Helpful Secondary Texts:</u> * Samuel C. Wheeler III, “The Conclusion of the <i>Theaetetus</i>” * Christopher Shields, “The Logos of ‘Logos’: The Third Definition of the <i>Theaetetus</i>”</p>
<p>Dec. 07</p>	<p>PAPER #2 DUE AT MIDNIGHT</p>	

4.7 Existentialism through Literature (course to be taught)

Course Description

We shall explore existentialist thought by focusing on literary texts that illustrate existentialist themes and views. The main question we shall consider is: according to existentialist thought, what is the human condition? Answering this question will involve examination of the notions of consciousness, freedom, angst, despair, guilt, and bad faith, as well as consideration of how human beings relate to one another. The course will be structured as follows. First, we shall examine the basic existential predicament as it is portrayed by Dostoyevsky, Camus, and Kafka. Second, we shall consider more specific features of this predicament—e.g., the natures of freedom, guilt, and our relations to others—through the fiction of Sartre, Richard Wright, and Simone de Beauvoir. Finally, given the understanding we have developed of the existential predicament, it is pertinent to ask whether a fulfilling life is possible according to the existentialist outlook. To this end, we shall examine the notions of bad faith and authenticity as illustrated by Sartre and Richard Wright.

Required Texts

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*.

de Beauvoir, Simone. *She Came to Stay*.

Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *No Exit and Three Other Plays*.

Wright, Richard. *The Outsider*.

Schedule of Readings [each "*" corresponds to 1-3 class sessions]

Introduction

What is Existentialism?

* Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"; Paul Vincent Spade, "The Gambler", "Vertigo"

Unit 1: Becoming Aware of the Existential Predicament

The "Death of God"

* Dostoyevsky, "Grand Inquisitor"

Becoming Human

* Camus, *The Stranger*

Becoming Inhuman

* Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

Paper Prompt for Unit 1:

* *The Stranger*: What makes Meursault a "stranger"? What is the transformation that Meursault undergoes in Part II of the novel? In what ways does Meursault become less of a stranger and more human as a result of this transformation? Finally, what does this transformation show more generally about what it is to be human?

Unit 2: Features of the Existential Predicament

Freedom and Contingency

- * Sartre, *Nausea*

Guilt

- * Wright, "The Man Who Lived Underground"

Problem of Others

- * Sartre, "No Exit"
- * Beauvoir, *She Came to Stay*
- * Wright, "The Man Who Killed a Shadow"

Paper Prompts for Unit 2:

- * *Nausea*: What is an "adventure"? How do adventures differ from what Annie calls "perfect moments"? Why does Roquentin eventually claim "There are no adventures – there are no perfect moments" (p. 213)? What does the desire to have adventures (or perfect moments) indicate about our existential predicament and the notions of contingency and freedom? Is Roquentin's decision at the end of the novel an attempt to have an adventure; why or why not?
- * *She Came to Stay*: Explain why Françoise feels threatened by Xavière. What does this say about Françoise's shared project with Pierre? What might Françoise's conflict with others illuminate about the nature of existential projects more generally?
- * Wright: The protagonist of "The Man Who Lived Underground" comes to discover an insight about guilt. What is the insight? Describe how the insight is revealed in the various incidents that occur underground. He wants to share the insight at the end of the story, but those he tries to share it with don't want him to share it. Why? What does the story reveal more generally about guilt and the individual's relation to society?
- * "No Exit": The characters of Sartre's play repeatedly come into conflict with one another, and it seems that these conflicts are unavoidable. Likewise, the characters are often dependent on others (whether their present company or those they left behind). Explain what these conflicts and dependencies illustrate about the human condition.

Unit 3: Coping with the Existential Predicament

Fleeing Freedom

- * Sartre, "Intimacy"

Embracing Freedom

- * Wright, *The Outsider*

Paper Prompt for Unit 3:

- * *The Outsider*: Damon Cross comes as close as we see to a character that is aware of his existential predicament and chooses the existential ideal of freedom. Yet, his project of choosing freedom ultimately ends in failure and regret. Why is this? Did he fail to live up to the existentialist ideal, and if so, how? Does existentialism hold out any hope for a good life?