

# Phil 101: Introduction to Philosophy

## COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor	Dr. Jesse Fitts
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Time & Place	
Website	Canvas
Office Hours	

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course has three main goals. The first purpose is specific to philosophy:

- An introduction to the big questions of philosophy.

The second goal will benefit you much beyond philosophy:

- The honing of your argumentative and analytic skills.

The third goal is also general:

- Coming to understand, in a deeper way, what you yourself believe about important issues that we all, as humans, face.

The learning outcomes for the course correspond to these goals. After the course, you will be conversant with some of the major issues of philosophy; you will be able to present, explain, and evaluate not only the arguments in the material we cover, but also arguments you encounter outside of philosophy; and you will decide, to some extent, what you believe about major philosophical issues.

## READINGS AND MATERIAL

There is no textbook for this class. Readings will be posted on Webcampus. Most of the material will be reading, but there will also be a few other mediums, all of which I post.

## ASSESSMENT

Your grade will consist of two components:

**Discussion/participation:** For this component, I reward effort. There will be various discussion activities. These will all take the form of in-class work that you turn in. If you're absent, you can't make up the participation. There will usually be something every class on which there isn't an exam. Participation will count for 25% of your grade, and you calculate this portion of your grade as

$$100\left(\frac{\# \text{ of completed discussions}}{\# \text{ of possible discussions}}\right).$$

**Attendance:** You are allowed one unexcused absence. After that, your grade will suffer.

**Exams:** For this component, I reward mastery. There will be 3 exams comprising true-false/multiple-choice questions and three short answer questions.

**How your exams are graded:** Each exam is worth 100 points. To get your grade for a particular exam, divide your score by the total possible points and multiply the result by 100.

**Exam dates:** 7/20, 8/1, 8/11.

**How the final grade is calculated:**

$$\frac{\text{Exam 1} + \text{Exam 2} + \text{Exam 3} + \text{Discussion}}{4}$$

## SLIDES AND HANDOUTS

For each meeting, there will be a slide set and a handout. As I lecture, your handout will correspond to my slides. On the handout, there will be information to fill in. On the slides, the information that you need to fill in will be in red. These handouts will be your go-to for studying for the exam. **The handouts are for you—you don't turn them in.**

## RESPECT FOR OTHER STUDENTS

Don't put down other students' suggestions. This doesn't mean that you can't disagree. Quite the contrary, disagreement is encouraged. Part of what we'll learn is to hold up everything, even our most deeply held beliefs, to critical scrutiny. However, we test, agree, and disagree with ideas—not each other. So disagree in a respectful way, and if you are disagreed with, don't take it personally.

## VERY ROUGH SCHEDULE

There will be a schedule on Blackboard. I will keep you up-to-date via announcements on Blackboard. We will (or: may) cover the following topics (the philosophers we cover are listed below the topics):

- The tools of philosophy: Logic and arguments
- Epistemology (skepticism): What can we know? Do we know that the (external) world exists? Do we know that the future will resemble the past? Readings:
  - Descartes
  - G.E. Moore
  - Wittgenstein
- The existence of God: Does God exist? If an all-good, all-knowing, all-powerful God were to exist, then how could there be evil in the world? If humans had free will, would that explain how both evil and a god as described above could co-exist?
  - Anselm
  - Richard Taylor
  - William Paley
  - J.L. Mackie
- Free will: Do we have free will? If we didn't, then how could we be morally responsible for our actions?
  - A.J. Ayer
  - Roderick Chisholm
  - Harry Frankfurt
- Philosophy of mind: Are our minds entirely physical? Can computers (one day) think in the way that humans do?
  - Frank Jackson
  - Alan Turing
  - John Searle
- Ethics: Are moral truths relative to one's culture, or are some moral truths universal? In this section, we will also cover particular ethics problems.
  - James Rachels
- The meaning of life: While we, as humans, search for meaning in life, is the universe that we inhabit, in some sense, meaningless?
  - Albert Camus
  - Thomas Nagel

## University Policies

**Academic Misconduct:** Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Copyright:** The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC):** The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated Disability Resource Center (DRC). The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Religious Holidays Policy:** Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Library Resources:** Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is [https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

**Tutoring and Coaching:** The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center:** One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Rebelmail:** By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.