

Philosophical English

Instructors: Michael Longenecker, Peter Finocchiaro, Ben Cross

Meeting Times: Thursdays.

- For Unit 1, the times are as follows:
 - Group 1: 8:50am - 11:25am
 - Group 2: 9:10am - 11:45am
- The times for units 2 and 3 will be decided at a later date by their primary instructors.

Course Description:

Our central goal in this course is to cultivate the ability to conduct philosophical research in English. To that end, we will divide this course into three parts. In the first part, we will learn the “tools” of philosophy, focusing especially on the structure of philosophical arguments. In the second part, we will learn some central concepts in the areas of epistemology and metaphysics. In the third part, we will learn some central concepts in the areas of ethics and political philosophy. While the course will be conducted online, we expect students to be highly participatory. Because this course is an “introduction” to professional Anglophone philosophy, we will also occasionally address questions about how to do philosophy professionally.

Grade Distribution: Your overall grade is calculated as follows:

- 10% - Participation
- 63% - 12 Weekly Assignments
 - 6% per assignment on regular weeks*
 - 3% per assignment on podcast weeks**
- 27% - 3 Podcasts
 - 9% per assignment)

*In Unit 1, for each week the 6% is distributed as follows: 3% for the accurate completion of in-class exercises, 3% for the after-class assignment.

**In Unit 1, the 3% is calculated solely on the basis of in-class exercises.

Participation:

Philosophy is an activity that we do, and active participation in philosophy is the best way to learn to do philosophy. You are expected to interact with me and with other students inside and outside of class. It's important to note, though, that active participation is more than just being vocal; it requires carefully thinking through issues and engaging with peers, often by listening to, supporting, clarifying, or justifying their comments. Doing philosophy is not just about expressing your own ideas, but is just as much about engaging with the ideas of others. Metaphorically speaking, the ideal philosophical discussion is less like a game of ping pong and more like a soccer (football) match. You will be graded on the extent to which you follow this model of active participation.

Weekly Assignments:

Each week the instructor will give you a weekly assignment to be completed individually.

Podcasts:

You will collaborate with other students in small groups to produce 5 minutes of philosophical conversation. Your group may choose their own topic to discuss or they may choose to have a topic assigned by me. Ideally, the conversation will address issues covered in class, issues relevant to current events or culture, or issues connected to your own philosophical interests. These conversations will be recorded and sent to the instructor for evaluation.

Letter Grade Distribution: In this course we will use the following scale to convert between numerical and letter grades:

96.00 - 100.00	A+	70.00 - 74.99	B-
90.00 - 95.99	A	67.00 - 69.99	C+
85.00 - 89.99	A-	63.00 - 66.99	C
80.00 - 84.99	B+	60.00 - 62.99	C-
75.00 - 79.99	B	00.00 - 59.99	D

SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Fundamentals

Primary Instructor: Michael Longenecker

Week 1: Philosophical Fields, the Basics of Argumentation

Week 2: Generalizations, Arguments by Analogy

Week 3: Deductive Arguments

Week 4: Fallacies, Inference to the Best Explanation

- Podcast assignment week

Unit 2: Epistemology + Metaphysics

Primary Instructor: Peter Finocchiaro

Week 5: Epistemology: Epistemic Goals

Reading: James's "Will to Believe"

Week 6: Epistemology: Expert Testimony

Reading: Elga's "Reflection and Disagreement"

Week 7: Metaphysics: Ontology and Nominalism

Reading: Lewis and Lewis's "Holes"

Week 8: Metaphysics: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Frankfurt's "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

- Podcast assignment week

Unit 3: Ethics + Political Philosophy

Primary Instructor: Ben Cross

Week 9: Ethics

Reading: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Week 10: Ethics

Reading: Nozick, "The Experience Machine" (*Anarchy, State and Utopia*)

Week 11: Political Philosophy

Reading: Dworkin, "Embarrassing Stories?" (*Justice for Hedgehogs*)

Week 12: Political Philosophy

Reading: Machiavelli, "Concerning the Way in Which Princes Should Keep Faith" (*The Prince*, chapter 18)

- Podcast assignment week
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