

Course Syllabus



Introduction to Philosophical Thought

Winter 2018

[Meeting Days/Time]
[Building, Room Number]

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to philosophical thought as both ‘what constitutes philosophical thought,’ as well as ‘how to think philosophically’. In lieu of typical ‘Intro to Philosophy’ courses, which typically offer surveys of philosophical thought and/or limited introductions to ‘tough’ logical or ethical problems, this class will immerse the student in the practice of reading, analyzing, and critically responding to texts, arguments, and ideas. Students will read primary texts from representative thinkers from three historical periods: Ancient (Plato and Aristotle), Modern (Descartes and Kant), and “Postmodern” (Heidegger and Levinas).

Course Objectives

Course Goals:

1. Gain knowledge of philosophical thought through major periods of Western philosophy
2. Improve the skill of ‘deep reading’: the ability to see the structure of arguments and ideas within texts and interpreting them accurately
3. Develop the skill of interacting with ideas and cogently formulating critical responses
4. Learn how to use basic academic research tools

Correlated Outcomes:

1. Short weekly quizzes over basic content and a final content exam
2. Weekly small group discussions about text; weekly activities, including homework handouts, submitting discussion questions, small group meeting responses, various low-stakes writings (including in-class thesis practice, minute papers, and lecture summaries)
3. Term-long project of developing theses for critical responses, culminating in a term prospectus, a revision process, and a final extended prospectus.

4. Required interaction with academic journals in some weekly assignments; interaction with research resources in library for prospectus project

Textbook & Materials

No Required Books: since this class is meant for all majors, I require no books for purchase. We will read sections from most of these, and I will provide the PDFs. However, philosophy majors should consider purchasing the following books, as these texts will be used in multiple courses.

Books suggested for Philosophy Majors (in order of priority):

1. Plato: Basic Works
2. Aristotle: Basic Works
3. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*
4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*
5. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*
6. Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*
7. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*
8. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*

Instructor Information

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Phone: --- --- ----

Email: Michael.Laminack@du.edu

Office Location:

Office Hours: M 9-11, T 2-3, F 12-1

Delivery Method

This is an online course, which means that the class will take place entirely online. The course is delivered using the Canvas online learning management system and you will need to take the responsibility to be sure that you complete the various assignments and exams as scheduled and, more importantly, that you stay current with the course and don't let the flexibility of doing this online let you fall behind. Submit all assignments through Canvas, accessible through the "Assignments" tab.

Grading Information

Participation

20%

- Each student is required to read the text for the week and complete all assignments related to the texts, lectures, and other media. Completion of these assignments will count as 'attendance' for the session, as well as participation in the course.

Small Group Meetings

25%

- The class will be split into small groups for discussion. Throughout most of the term, groups will meet via video conference for one hour.
- One member of each group will write up a 250 word summary and interpretation of the text, and a description of the key questions or thoughts they discussed during their conference. This will be submitted to the group discussion board. The group 'recorder' will rotate throughout the term.

Prospectus

10%

- Each student will produce a 500-750 word prospectus (detailed below) that presents a thesis in response to the texts and ideas presented in the course material and related to a topic of the student's choosing.

Extended Prospectus

20%

- After students submit the initial prospectus, they will receive feedback from their small group and from the professor in order to revise the prospectus. They will then expand the initial prospectus into a 2,000-3,000 word 'extended prospectus.'

Content Exam

20%

- This is a final comprehensive exam over primary text content for the course.

Syllabus Quiz

5%

- Students will complete a short quiz to show they read and understood the syllabus and what is expected of them throughout the quarter.

Grading Scale:

93-99 A

90-93 A-

86-89 B+

83-86 B

80-83 B-

76-79 C+

73-76 C

70-73 C-

66-69 D+

63-66 D

0-63 F

Assignment Descriptions

Syllabus Quiz

due week 1

- This is a short (10-15min) quiz that ensures you read and understand the syllabus

Content Quizzes

weekly (see schedule below)

- These are short (10-15min) quizzes on the basic content of the weekly readings

Small Group Meetings

weekly (see schedule)

- I will split the class into groups of 3-5. These groups will meet for one hour over video conference each week. (If there are major issues that keep students from meeting together, I will work with them to come up with an alternative).
- During the meetings, students should discuss the text and ask these key questions:
 - What is the author's thesis? What are they trying to get you to think that you didn't think previously?
 - What's the point? What is the author trying to convey?
 - What is the author's 'method'? Are they using purely logical arguments, experiential examples? Are they citing other thinkers?
 - How would you describe the genre of the text? Narrative? Poetry? Scientific discourse?
 - What are the implications of the author's argument? Where can you see the argument expressed or refuted in your experience or in the world today?

Discussion Responses/Question Write-ups

weekly (see schedule)

- For each meeting, one student from the group will write up a 250 word piece that includes the following:
 - Summary, Interpretation, and Critique: describe the answers to the questions discussed during the small group meeting
 - Relay any questions or difficult part of the text for which your group needs clarification
- These write-ups will be submitted in the small group discussion boards

Thesis Practices

occasional, after week 2 (see schedule)

- These are short activities where students practice making an argument in response to the primary and secondary texts and lectures. Do you agree or disagree with the argument(s)? How would argue for your case? What evidence would you invoke to rebut alternative views? Think through these things and write 1-2 sentences that concisely communicate your argument.

Lecture Summaries

weekly (see schedule)

- Students will be required to write short (150 word) summaries or outlines of the key points from the video lectures. While these ensure that students watch the lectures, they also provide helpful running notes for the content covered in the course. These will prove highly beneficial for the Content Exam.

Prospectus

due week 5

- Students will determine a workable thesis based on one of the course texts and develop that thesis into a 500-700 word prospectus. The prospectus should follow these guidelines:
 - Write the prospectus in the format of a submission to an Undergraduate research conference.
 - Attempt to draw the attention of a conference selection committee by offering a concise thesis and show how it contributes to the field or to a specific issue (political, economic, sociological, etc.).
 - Describe what method you will use to defend or assert your argument.
 - Briefly describe what evidence you find that support your argument

Extended Prospectus

due week 8

- After receiving feedback on the initial prospectus, students will expand on their initial prospectus, and develop a 2,000-3,000 word Extended Prospectus. The Extended Prospectus will flesh out the initial prospectus by:
 - Demonstrating the method of your argument.
 - Engaging with the evidence that supports your claim.
 - Defending against some potential counterarguments.
 - Ending with a brief summarizing conclusion.

Content Exam

due week 10

- Comprehensive exam over content covered in the content quizzes. Students should exhibit comprehension of the key ideas covered throughout the course. This will be a multiple choice and short-answer test.

Course Schedule

Week 1	- Starting reflections on 'philosophical thought' - What does this mean? - Why does it matter? - What we hope to accomplish this term	Due Tuesday: Watch video lecture - Submit personal introduction video - Review syllabus - Take Syllabus Quiz
Week 2	Reading: - Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , bk I-II, IV, and X [~100 pgs]	Due Tuesday: - Watch video lecture - Submit Lecture Summary - Take Content Quiz Due Friday: - Small Group video conference - Submit Small Group Response

<p>Week 3</p>	<p>Reading: - Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i>, bk I-IV [~65] - <i>Cambridge Companion to Aristotle</i>, Jon Barnes on Aristotles metaphysics [~45]</p>	<p>T: - Watch Thesis Guide video - Content Quiz - Thesis Practice F: - Small Group video conference - Individual submission: complete guided questions handout</p>
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Reading: - René Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (entirety) [~60] - Student-selected secondary text(s)</p>	<p>T: - Watch Academic Resources Guide - Content Quiz - Select secondary text from course Resources - Submit Thesis Practice F: - Small Group video conference: discuss primary and secondary texts - Individual submission: Summarize, Interpret, and Critique chosen secondary text</p>
<p>Week 5</p>	<p>Reading: - Immanuel Kant, <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>, Sections I and II [~100]</p>	<p>T: - Watch video lecture - Submit Lecture Summary F: - Small Group video conference - Submit Small Group response Prospectus Due</p>
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>Reading: Immanuel Kant, <i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>, (entirety) [~50]</p>	<p>T: - Complete MidTerm assessment - Watch Research Resources Guide</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content Quiz - Submit Thesis Practice <p>F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small Group discussion: review and revise individual prospectuses
Week 7	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Martin Heidegger, <i>Being and Time</i>, Introduction [~45] - MH, <i>Introduction to Metaphysics</i>, bk I [~45] 	<p>T:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch video lecture - Submit Lecture Summary - Content Quiz <p>F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small Group video conference - Small Group Response
Week 8	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy of Hitlerism" essay [~25] - EL, <i>On Escape</i> [~75] 	<p>T:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch video lecture Submit Lecture Summary - Content Quiz <p>F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small Group video conference - Small Group Response <p>Extended Prospectus Due</p>
Week 9	<p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emmanuel Levinas, <i>Totality and Infinity</i>, Section I [~60] 	<p>T:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch video lecture - Submit Lecture Summary - Content Quiz <p>F:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small Group discussion: review and revise extended prospectuses - Small Group discussion: questions and issues from throughout course - Submit Small Group Response with questions for Content Exam Review

Week 10	No Reading: - Review notes from all course content	T: - Watch Content Exam Review video - Small Group video conference: review for Content Exam Final Revised Extended Prospectus Due F: Content Exam
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Assignment Rubrics/Grading Guides

Small Group Meetings

* Small Group Discussion Responses:

75 points possible	A-Level Participation (65-75 points)	B-Level Participation (50-65 points)	C-Level Participation (50 or less points)
Summary, Interpretation, and Critique (SIC) 75 points (one submission each)	Describes conversation within the video conference; offers a succinct attempt to summarize 2-3 main ideas of the text, attempt to draw out what those ideas mean, and respond with possible counterpoints/examples or further considerations in agreement; 250-350 words.	Lacks any reference to group discussion but still attempts to summarize, interpret, and critique; 150-250 words.	No reference to group; Lacks basic knowledge of text; offers little or no germane interpretation or response; 0-150 words.

***Attendance - 7 points/meeting; 50 points possible:** Each response should include an attendance list. Each meeting counts for 7 points.

Lecture Summaries and Thesis Practices

- These assignments will be graded pass/fail. As long as reasonable effort is shown, they will receive credit. Most importantly, these assignments will serve the student for later assignments.

Prospectus and Extended Prospectus

- Rubrics for these assignments will be given to students week 3. It is important that students complete some thesis practices and grasp the class expectations prior to working on these assignments.

Late-work Policy

- It is your responsibility to get work in on time. The professor is not required to count your late work for credit. That said, to have late work *considered* for credit, upload it to the “late work consideration” folder on Canvas (and provide any additional details that you feel appropriate; write the details on the Late Work Consideration form - no need to contact the professor separately unless there is a problem you need to talk through; keep in mind, though, that the professor is not obligated to count your late work for credit).

No Begging Policy

- Some examples of unacceptable begging that can result in a **15-point deduction** per instance are (i) asking the professor to approve your unjustified late work for full credit; you can hand it in late and you can write your justification on the relevant cover sheet (see above), and you might or might not get credit--but do not plan to ask for full credit beyond handing it in. The professor is under no obligation to grade or credit late work.

Discussion Guidelines and Norms

Please follow these guidelines when participating in the online discussions:

- Share your thoughts and experiences as your own. Try not to generalize or speak for others.
- Listen to the content of what others say. If you don't understand someone's view, ask them to explain, don't judge.
- Disagreement shows the complexity of these issues and helps us learn. Feel free to disagree, but do so in a respectful manner. This is an open forum for all participants to brainstorm and explore new ideas.
- Keep personal information confidential (within this course).

Remember that it is easy to misinterpret written communication. Sometimes written comments may inadvertently seem impolite or could otherwise be taken the wrong way – strive to really explain yourself and avoid making assumptions about other people’s intentions.

Statement on Electronics in the Classroom

- Since my courses typically entail close-reading of texts, I generally disallow use of electronic devices (including laptops, phones, etc.) in the classroom. These devices can be a significant distraction, particularly when working through difficult to understand texts that require intense focus. I also recognize, however, that some students require electronic devices to learn

effectively. If this is true for you, please speak with me after class within the first two weeks for a waiver.

Communicating with your Instructor

For urgent questions or personal matters, please contact me via my office phone (during regular business hours) or email. I will do my best to respond to questions in a timely manner. For non-urgent course related questions, post your questions in the “Course Questions” discussion forum so that everyone can benefit from the questions and responses.

Note: I will post a ‘one-on-one’ session calendar signup on Canvas. You can sign up for a direct video or phone conversation with me.

Technical Requirements & Technical Support

You should have:

- Reliable access to a computer and the Internet
- The ability to attach a document to an email message
- Ability to download and install required plug-ins
- Supported Web Browser and operating system (refer to link below)

Canvas: Before starting the course, please make sure you have reviewed the [Online Student Orientation](#). If you have questions or issues related to Canvas, use the Help link located in the upper right corner in Canvas for support.

Please see the list of [Supported Browsers for Canvas](#) and the [Canvas accessibility information](#).

Technical Questions?

For technical support unrelated to Canvas, or if you have problems logging in, call the DU helpdesk at 303.871.4700 or email support@du.edu.

General Policies

Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the [University of Denver Honor Code](#). These expectations include the application of academic integrity and honesty in your class participation and assignments. Violations of these policies include, but are not limited to:

Academic Misconduct

- Plagiarism, including any representation of another's work or ideas as one's own in academic and educational submissions.
- Cheating, including any actual or attempted use of resources not authorized by the instructor(s) for academic submissions.
- Fabrication, including any falsification or creation of data, research or resources to support academic submissions.

Students with Disabilities/Medical Issues

- If you qualify for academic accommodations because of a disability or medical issue please submit a Faculty Letter to me from Disability Services Program (DSP) in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. [Location and Contact Information of Disability Services Program; link to University Handbook for Students with Disabilities].
- Please let me know within the first two class meetings if there are assignments or course expectations that need to be adjusted for you to better access the materials in this course. I will do what I can to support your growth and learning.

FERPA and Privacy

The University of Denver is committed to the safeguarding and accurate maintenance of student records. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 provides students with a number of rights regarding their educational records. For more information about this act and student privacy, see the [Notification to Students of Educational Records and Student Information Rights and Policies](#) or contact the Office of the Registrar at 303.871.4300 or registrar@du.edu.

Title IX

Gender violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, age, appearance, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The University of Denver is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. [The Center for Advocacy, Prevention and Empowerment \(CAPE\)](#) provides programs and resources to help promote healthy relationships, teach non-violence and equality, and foster a respectful and safe environment for all members of the University of Denver community. All services are confidential and free of charge.

For assistance during business hours, call 303-871-3853 and ask to speak to the Director of CAPE. After hours, please call the Emergency & Crisis Dispatch Line at 303-871-3000 and ask to speak to the CAPE advocate on call.