PHIL 300 Introduction to Philosophy – Fall 2024 10:30

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# Introduction

## Course and Instructor

Our course is Philosophy 300, class code 14150. I am your instructor, Jeff Dale (he), adjunct professor of philosophy. I invite you to read my [statement on philosophy and pedagogy](http://jdphilosophy.com/Jeff%20Dale%20%28JD%29%20-%20Statement%20on%20Philosophy%20and%20Pedagogy.pdf) on my [website](http://www.jdphilosophy.com/).

## Communications

You can message me anytime via Canvas or at DaleJ@crc.losrios.edu. I normally reply to email within one weekday; if you don’t receive a reply within that time, please don’t hesitate to message me again.

You can visit me without an appointment at the scheduled times given below. To meet me outside of those times, please message me to request an appointment.

## Resources

I care about your physical, mental, and material well-being, which are important to your success as a college student. In case you need medical, counseling, or other wellness services, or you experience challenges with food, housing, or other basic needs, I have included a file of resources in the Course module.

## This Syllabus

Any student’s completion of any of the course’s assessments shall constitute an affirmation that the student has read, understood, and accepted this syllabus as our agreement for this course.

# Course Structure and Requirements

## Course Modality

Students are expected to attend regularly scheduled class meetings on campus, following campus safety protocols. In-class exams and other assessments are scheduled during these time slots. Limited exceptions to the schedule may be made if needed, at my sole discretion.

If a class meeting cannot be held in person, it will be held via teleconference during the same scheduled time (synchronous) or replaced with a recorded lecture (asynchronous). In such a case, students will be expected to attend or view, requiring access to a device with the Zoom app and a reliable Internet connection. Use of camera and microphone during a teleconference is desirable but not required. Except as noted below, the course will be otherwise unchanged in such a case.

If a scheduled drop-in time cannot be held in person, it will be held via Zoom.

This course requires the use of Canvas, the campus’s learning management system. [Support](https://losrios.edu/student-resources/technology-resources/apps-and-software-for-students/canvas-online-learning-system) is available.

## Schedule

The term schedule for the class, including the timing of all reading assignments, in-class activities, and assessments, is in a separate schedule document in Canvas (Course module).

Regular class meetings are Tuesdays and Thursdays, August 27 through December 12 (except November 28), 10:30 to 11:50 am. Our on-campus classroom is Learning Resource Center (LRC) room 201. Our final exam session is in the same classroom, Tuesday, December 17, 10:15 am to 12:15 pm.

Drop-in times are each class meeting day, 9:00 to 10:10 am, and on our final exam day, 9:00 to 10:00 am. Our drop-in room is a shared adjunct faculty office, Business & Social Science (BS) room 143, but teleconference via Zoom is also available upon request.

## Textbook and Other Materials

Students are not required to buy or rent any textbook or other materials. All required readings are open educational resources (OER) or otherwise free online. Links are both in the schedule document and in the applicable module folders.

# Academic Offering

## Catalog Information

“In this course, students will apply the critical thinking techniques of analysis, evaluation, and synthesis to areas of philosophical inquiry including meta-philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of religion, history of philosophy, and existentialism. Students will practice distinguishing fact from opinion, employing inductive and deductive reasoning, identifying logical errors and fallacies, and developing oral and written arguments to support their own philosophical perspectives or challenge the perspectives of others. The quality and quantity of the course’s required writing will reflect the standards of a second semester composition course.” 3.0 units. No prerequisites.

## Level of Course

The performance standards of this course reflect the assumption that students have college-level reading and writing skills, such as would be represented by successful completion of ENGWR 300 or the equivalent.

## General Education Requirements

This course meets the following GE requirements: AA/AS Area II(b); CSU Area A3; CSU Area C2; IGETC Area 3B.

## Learning Objectives

1. Identify important questions and conceptions within a range of traditional subfields of philosophy (epistemology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, and aesthetics), distinguish from among divergent interpretations those that are better supported and those that are less well supported, construct well supported interpretations of diverse viewpoints, and reason well about written and oral discourse.

1a: Evaluate information concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of philosophy for quality, validity, and bias to determine if it is objective and reliable.

1b: Evaluate the relationship of language to logic and analyze, criticize, and rationally justify points of view concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of philosophy.

1. Reason inductively and deductively; reach conclusions concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of philosophy based on sound or cogent inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief.

2a: Distinguish fact from non-factual judgment, belief from knowledge, and fallacious reasoning from correct (invalid or weak) reasoning in respect to central issues within a range of traditional subfields of philosophy.

## Course Plan

* The first part of the course is on the formulation and analysis of logical arguments, which is both to support student success in the remainder of the course and to develop broadly applicable reasoning skills.
* The remainder of the course is in six parts to engage the following core philosophical topics: knowledge and skepticism, the mind, the self, free will, the existence of God, and the foundations of morality.

# Student Work and Assessments

## Approach to Learning

*This course is designed to reward consistent engagement and study throughout the term.* Students should ensure that they have mastered each unit of material as we complete our coverage of it. Cramming for exams is unlikely to be effective.

## Grading

The department discourages grade inflation and fixed grading curves. To earn a term grade better than a C requires better than adequate performance. The course’s grade distribution is not predetermined, but is intended to reflect actual performance of the students in the class.

Course grading is based on a total of 1,000 points for the term, with the following range minimums: 900 A, 800 B, 650 C, 500 D. The college doesn’t assign +/- grades. The point categories are engagement (200) and exams (800).

## Engagement

“Engagement” reflects several activities to build student understanding and contribute to exam performance.

A maximum of 200 points may be pooled from three sources: participation, attendance, and homework quizzes. The total of the available points in each of those three sources is well over 200. Thus, students can earn the same engagement score with different mixes of point sources.

Another 20 points are available for a philosophy presentation write-up. These points are not included in the pool, and thus could increase total engagement points beyond the nominal maximum of 200 (i.e., extra credit).

### Participation and Attendance

Each student earns a “participation day” for each class meeting in which they make one or more relevant contributions to full-class discussion. Thus, students are credited for contributing to multiple class meetings, but not for additional contributions to the same class meeting. Participation days are scored at eight points for each of the first six, and two points for each thereafter.

Each student earns an attendance point for each class meeting in which they are substantially in attendance but do not earn a participation day.

### Homework Quizzes

Each homework quiz is a Canvas quiz offering three attempts, of which the highest score is counted. Each quiz has a point maximum in the range of five to twenty. To maximize learning (and exam performance), students are encouraged to space out their homework attempts, and to use the time between attempts to review the material, bring questions to class, and/or discuss the material with me.

### Philosophy Presentation Write-up

Students may attend or view the recording of any two from an extensive list of pre-approved philosophy presentations and submit a write-up of the presentation material in accordance with instructions (Course module).

## Exams

There are seven exams, one for each module, each scored out of 100. They are given in class, on paper, with no use of materials permitted. If a class meeting with an exam cannot be held in person, a substitute exam will be given in Canvas during the scheduled time, with use of materials permitted.

Our final exam session will be an opportunity for each student to make up or retake any two of the seven exams. (Making up missed exams is required in precedence to retaking exams.) For each exam retaken, the higher of the student’s original or retake score will be counted.

A maximum of 800 points may be earned from these seven exam scores (original or retaken). The highest three scores will be doubled, the next two lower scores will be counted singly, and the lowest two scores will drop.

# Policies and Procedures

## Enrollment and Attendance

In accordance with college policies, students are expected to attend all class meetings, and may be dropped from the course for non-attendance under the following circumstances:

* Missed the first class meeting: will be dropped, unless there are enough available enrollment slots.
* Missed the first three class meetings: may be dropped regardless of the availability of enrollment slots.
* Missed any four class meetings: may be dropped at my sole discretion.

Students are encouraged to communicate with me, in advance if possible, about any absences.

## Reading and Preparation for Class Meetings

Students are expected to do the assigned reading *before* the first class meeting for which it’s assigned in the schedule, and to come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the material. Class discussions are conducted with the assumption that students have met this expectation – class discussions are not intended to be a substitute for the reading. Students should anticipate that *careful and repeat* reading is generally needed for full understanding, and are encouraged to take notes while reading and to bring their notes to class meetings.

## Conduct of Discussion

Doing philosophy requires open and critical discussion of ideas. Even the expression of a mistaken idea may be useful in advancing understanding, and no idea is exempt from questions of justification. Good discussion requires an environment in which all participants feel safe and valued. *People deserve respect; ideas do not*. Harassment, personal attacks, and contemptuous behavior are not tolerated. Any student with concerns about classmates’ behavior should inform me as soon as practical, even if they believe I am (or should be) aware of their concerns.

Doing philosophy also requires concentration and careful thought. Accordingly, students should take care to minimize distractions in class meetings. I intend to keep the rules casual about arrival and departure, use of electronics, and classroom procedure, but I reserve the prerogative to implement stricter rules if needed.

## Staying Informed

Each student is accountable for attending class meetings, obtaining notes from other students for any class meetings missed, regularly checking campus email, referring to this syllabus and Canvas content as needed, and carefully following the term schedule in Canvas (Course module).

## Use of Technology

Each student is accountable for maintaining regular access to Canvas and to campus email, for understanding and troubleshooting their use, and for verifying successful electronic submission of work. Students experiencing technical difficulties should make alternative arrangements (such as the use of a friend’s computer or an on-campus computer lab) and/or check the tech resources in the resources file (Course module).

## Missed Assessments

Exams and homework quizzes are generally scored at zero if not taken when scheduled or submitted when due. Credit for participation is available only to students substantially attending. Exceptions to this policy are subject to my sole judgment. Students who, for significant illness or other good reason, need an accommodation should request it as soon as possible.

## No Other Credit Opportunities

Students are accountable for exerting sufficient effort for the assessments described above, which are intended to be a fair reflection of performance. I invite you to read my [reasons against unplanned extra credit opportunities](http://jdphilosophy.com/Jeff%20Dale%20%28JD%29%20-%20Reasons%20Against%20Unplanned%20Extra%20Credit%20Opportunities.pdf).

## Study Aids

Class discussion slides and practice quizzes, found in the applicable module folders, are both useful as study aids. Practice quizzes become available after the related for-credit homework quizzes are due. Students are encouraged to condense the materials into a study guide to promote learning.

## Academic Integrity

Cheating is a serious offense. Students are accountable for complying with [campus policies on academic integrity](https://crc.losrios.edu/about-us/our-values/student-rights-and-responsibilities/plagiarism-and-cheating).

Plagiarism may include not only direct quotation without quotation marks or attribution, but also paraphrasing without attribution, or otherwise using the ideas of others (including me or fellow students) as though they were one’s own. Plagiarism can result from the careless error of forgetting to cite. Students are urged to protect themselves by *immediately* recording, in their document to be submitted, information about *any source consulted*, even if it’s not intended for use (since students might unknowingly use words or ideas from them), and even if it’s not yet complete and/or in proper citation format.

Facilitating other students’ cheating is itself a form of cheating. For example, if one student gives a copy of their writing to another student, who then plagiarizes the writing, *both* students are subject to cheating accusations. Students can be penalized *after* leaving the class, including the rescinding of their recorded grades in the class, if they facilitate the cheating of students in later terms. Students are urged to protect themselves by never risking their work being copied in this way.

A violation of academic integrity may result in a zero on the applicable assessment, communication of the incident to the dean and/or department chair, and the filing of a student conduct violation report for possible administrative sanctions up to and including expulsion from the institution.

## Disability Accommodations

I’m committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course content is usable by all students. If you believe that you need disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please contact [campus disability support services](https://crc.losrios.edu/student-resources/support-services/disability-support-programs-and-services-%28dsps%29) as soon as possible for an assessment. A current accommodation letter from them is required.

## Recording and Sharing of Course Material

Video or audio recording of any portion of our class meetings is generally not permitted, except in accordance with properly documented disability accommodations or as may be required by law. Any such recordings that have been authorized are proprietary and may not be posted online or otherwise shared beyond the authorized use.

Slides and other course materials (other than the readings) are proprietary and may not be posted online or otherwise shared with anyone, except as needed for the student’s own completion of course work.

## Equity

In conducting my courses and assessing my students’ work, I am committed to equitable treatment of students irrespective of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, family situation, language, dialect, disability, and other socioeconomic factors.

## Mandated Reporting

All faculty are considered “mandated reporters” for suspected child abuse or neglect under the California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act, California Penal Code sections 11164-11174.3.

## Contingencies

If I am unavailable to conduct scheduled meetings or manage the course at any time during the term, you will be contacted and advised how the course will proceed, including any needed changes in instructor or modality.