

Introduction to Philosophy

Course Text

Moore, Brooke Noel and Kenneth Bruder. *Philosophy: The Power of Ideas*, 7th edition, McGraw-Hill, 2008. ISBN: 9780073535722 [This text is available as an etextbook at purchase or students may find used, new, or rental copies at [this link](#)]

Course Description

This course is a critical introduction to the field of philosophical inquiry. After defining philosophy and identifying the major fields of philosophical study, the course examines the history of Western thought, from the famous Greek philosophers up to the cutting-edge intellectuals of today. The course then dives into various thematic topics, including metaphysics, epistemology, free will and determinism, evil and the existence of God, personal identity, ethical values, and political philosophy. The course concludes with an analysis of different perspectives, including Eastern philosophies, and postcolonial thought.

Course Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the major philosophical controversies.
- Evaluate the Socratic method and the basic principles of logic.
- Evaluate the contributions of Descartes to the debates on the meaning of knowledge and existence.
- Analyze the concepts of empiricism with reference to the theories of Locke, Hume, and Berkeley.
- Analyze Kant's theory that experience is the result of sense data processed by the mind and relate it to modern cognitivism and constructivism.
- Explore the concepts of structuralism and deconstruction.
- Understand the main ideas of existentialism as a counter to Hegelian Absolute Idealism.
- Examine some modern approaches to the debate on the mental-physical divide.
- Compare the approaches of Kant, Nietzsche, and the pragmatists to the concept of knowledge.
- Analyze the theories that see mental states as functional states and examine their implications.
- Critically evaluate the concepts of free will and determinism.
- Examine the cosmological arguments for the existence of God.
- Compare theories that insist on universal values with those that argue that values are culture specific.
- Critically examine theories that see the self as a self-generating process rather than as a static entity.
- Compare Mill's and Marx's views on the relation between the individual and the state.
- Examine the teachings of Taoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism and other Eastern influences on philosophy.

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Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites to take Introduction to Philosophy.

Important Terms

In this course, different terms are used to designate tasks:

- Proctoring: all final exams require proctoring which can be completed conveniently from your home. A webcam is required.
- Tutoring: memberships include online tutoring for students to access with any content/subject related questions in the place of faculty. If your tutor is not able to answer your questions please contact a student advisor.
- Review Activities: A non-graded assignment to assist you in practicing the skills discussed in a topic.
- Homework: non-graded quizzes that help highlight the content which will be assessed on graded exams.
- Graded Exam: A graded online assessment.

Course Evaluation Criteria

StraighterLine provides a percentage score and letter grade for each course. See [Academic Questions](#) section in FAQ for further details on percentage scores and grading scale. A passing percentage is **70%** or higher.

If you have chosen a Partner College to award credit for this course, your final grade will be based upon that college's grading scale. Only passing scores will be considered by Partner Colleges for an award of credit.

There are a total of 1000 points in the course:

Topic	Assessment	Points Available
2	Graded Exam #1	75
7	Graded Exam #2	75
	Cumulative Graded Midterm Exam	200
10	Graded Exam #3	75
14	Graded Exam #4	75
15	Cumulative Graded Final Exam	500
Total		1000

Course Topics and Objectives

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Topic	Topic	Subtopics	Objectives
1	Introduction to Philosophy and Philosophical Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Is Philosophy? • Philosophic Concerns • The Tools of Philosophy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology. • Identify the major philosophical controversies. • Evaluate the Socratic method and the basic principles of logic.
2	History of Western Thought: The Greeks to the Middle Ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pre-Socratics • Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle • Augustine to Aquinas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the contributions of the early Greek thinkers to epistemological and metaphysical questions. • Understand how all explorations of knowledge can be traced back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. • Review how St. Augustine's philosophy can be traced to Plato and how Aquinas reconciled Aristotelian thought and Christian belief.
3	Epistemology: The Search for Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skepticism and Rationalism • Empiricism and Phenomenalism • Constructivism, Relativism, and Pragmatism • Defining Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare different forms of skepticism and rationalism. • Evaluate theories dealing with knowledge as verifiable. • Compare the approaches of Kant, Nietzsche, and the pragmatists to the concept of knowledge. • Compare different theories that attempt a definition of knowledge.
4	History of Western Thought: The Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus • Descartes—Skepticism and Dualism • Hobbes and Materialism • Spinoza and Leibniz—Versions of Monadology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the contributions of Descartes to the debates on the meaning of knowledge and existence. • Examine Hobbes's materialism as a counter to dualism. • Compare Ancient and Modern conceptions of knowledge.

5	Metaphysics: The Mind-Body Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dualism • Physicalism • Functionalism and Artificial Intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the theories that argue the existence of both physical and mental states. • Compare theories that argue that there are only physical states with dualistic theories. • Analyze the theories that see mental states as functional states and examine their implications.
6	History of Western Thought: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locke, Hume, and Berkeley—Empiricism • Kant and the Origins of Constructivism • Hegel and Schopenhauer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the concepts of empiricism with reference to the theories of Locke, Hume, and Berkeley. • Analyze Kant's theory that experience is the result of sense data processed by the mind and relate it to modern cognitivism and constructivism. • Understand the main features of Hegelian Absolute Idealism and Schopenhauer's rejection of it.
7	Personal Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Body or the Soul? • Memory, Desire, and Reincarnation • Self as a Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically consider animalism and the soul theories of individual identity. • Examine theories that argue that memory determines sense of identity. • Critically examine theories that see the self as a self-generating process rather than as a static entity.
8	The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Continental Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kierkegaard and Nietzsche—Existentialism • Literature and Philosophy • New Ideas from Other Disciplines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the views Camus and Sartre and those of Husserl and Heidegger on the nature of experience. • Review analytic philosophy's contributions by Wittgenstein, Russell and Habermas.

9	History of Western Thought: The Twentieth Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatism • Logic and Philosophy • Language and Philosophy • The Philosophy of Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the arguments against fixed absolute truth as presented by Charles Sanders Pierce, William James, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty. • Explore the methods by which Bertrand Russell and others related philosophy to an activity based on logical analysis. • Examine the importance of studying language to explore experience. • Examine some modern approaches to the debate on the mental-physical divide.
10	Ethical Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absolutism and Relativism • Utilitarianism • Duty • The Definition of Virtue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare theories that insist on universal values with those that argue that values are culture specific. • Investigate the impact of utilitarian philosophies on concepts related to ethics. • Examine the theories of Kant, Ross, Rawl, and Nozick with reference to ethics as related to an individual's social commitments. • Evaluate the utilitarian and Kantian concepts of virtue.
11	Political Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Social Contract • Justice • The State and the Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare, contrast, and evaluate the social contract theories of Hobbes and Locke. • Critically evaluate various accounts of justice: Plato's meritocracy, Aquinas's natural law, Mill's utilitarianism. • Compare Mill's and Marx's views on the relation between the individual and the state.
12	Evil and Existence of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmological Arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the cosmological arguments for the

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teleological Arguments • Other Approaches to God 	<p>existence of God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate arguments for the existence of God that are based on a larger design, miracles, and religious experience. • Investigate ontology, the problem of evil, the existence of God, and theology.
13	Free Will and Determinism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determinism • Libertarianism • Compatibilism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically evaluate the concepts of determinism. • Examine and comment on theories that oppose determinism, including libertarianism. • Differentiate between traditional and hierarchical compatibilism.
14	Eastern Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism • Buddhism • Chinese Philosophies • The Philosophy of Samurai 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the contributions of Hinduism to epistemology and metaphysics. • Review Buddhist contributions to epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. • Examine the teachings of Taoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism. • Evaluate the martial precepts of the Samurai philosophy and relate them to Taoism and Confucianism.
15	Review Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review