

Philosophy 103-1000
Introduction to Philosophy

Totally Online

Term and Dates: May 21, 2018-June 23, 2018

Instructor: Dr. Alessandro Tomasi

Contact Info: atomasi111@gmail.com (preferred) and atomasi@mail.uri.edu Please, indicate in your subject header that you are in one of my classes (give course and section number). Also, please include your name in the email.

Department Phone: 401-874-2418

Availability: I will be active in the discussion forums and other work areas in Sakai at least five days each week. That will be where most of our class interaction will happen. Communication, when in the Sakai environment, benefits the entire class. Email should be reserved for concerns of a personal/sensitive nature.

Text: Exploring Philosophy: *An Introductory Anthology*, Fourth Edition, ed. Steven M. Cahn, 2012

Course Description and Objectives: This course is **ENTIRELY ONLINE**. A systemic study of basic philosophical questions, including: is there a God? How is knowledge acquired? Does life have meaning? These questions will be examined by reading major Western philosophers such as Plato, Descartes and others. Students will learn and practice several critical reasoning skills applicable to academic, professional and personal areas of life.

Successful completion of this course provides General Education credit in the outcomes of A3. Humanities and B1. Write Effectively.

Course Format and Requirements: The course is divided into 6 assignment periods. For each assignment period there is a reading assignment and study questions. During each assignment period, students are required to post messages that answer the study questions. Rules for the quality and quantity of the messages are described below. Deadlines for each assignment period are listed in the Schedule below. In addition to participation in class discussions, students will be required to take three exams, though the lowest grade will be dropped, and a final examination. Instructions on all these requirements are given below in the grading information section.

Final Grade Calculation:

Assignments	Percent
Online Participation (6 assignments: 6% each assignment)	36%
Exams (20% each)	40%
Final Examination	24%

TOTAL	100%
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Grading System:

NOTE: There is **no extra credit** available in this class. The only things for which you can receive credit in this class have been listed under the Grading Section.

NOTE: Makeup Exam Policy: Students are expected to take all exams and posts when scheduled. In the event of illness or extraordinary circumstances, the student must contact the faculty member and provide documentation to request an exception and approval to take a makeup exam. If the request is not approved, the grade will be recorded as a zero.

Online Participation is graded according to the number of acceptable messages (**messages include initial answers to the study questions AND replies to other students' messages**) posted by the student during each assignment period. Each assignment is worth 6% of your total grade. The course is divided into 6 assignments, for a total of 36% of your final grade. The grade for one assignment period is determined by the following formula:

Number of messages: 6 or more = between 85-100 (depending on the quality of your posts)
5 = between 70-85
4 = between 60-70
3 = between 50-60
2 = between 25-50
Fewer than 2 = between 0-25

Late conference posts will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor at least one day before the Conference ends. If there is an extraordinary or last-minute circumstance that causes you to be late with a Conference post, contact the instructor so that some alternative can be arranged.

Sending and Addressing Messages: To post a gradable message, click on “discussion and private messages,” and then on the appropriate forum (if we are working on the first assignment, go to “first assignment”; if we are on the second, go to “second assignment”; and so on). Post your contribution following the instructions provided there.

In posting your initial messages directly answering the study questions, go to the appropriate conference, click on “add new thread,” and make sure you change the subject header using this formula “assignment number” + “question number” (for example, “A1Q1,” or “A4Q2”). If you are replying to another student’s message, then leave the original header unchanged.

Make sure that you are in the correct forum when you post your message. The instructor will create a variety of forums which will contain messages regarding specific subjects, such as technical problems, biographies, assignments, and so forth. Do not send assignment, gradable messages to the instructor as personal (private) mail. The instructor reads all public messages that go to the class conferences.

Rules Governing the Quantity and Distribution of Messages: The messages that will count toward your grade in the course will be answers in part or whole to the main discussion questions and/or replies to other student's messages. In order to achieve maximum interaction, messages are to be evenly distributed over the whole assignment period.

NOTE: Messages are of two types: posts answering directly the study questions and replies to other students' messages. Unless specified, the term "message" will refer to both types.

1. Although you are free to post more, no more than 6 messages are required to receive a letter grade of an A for any given assignment period. Messages are judged according to both their quantity and quality. Criteria for the quality of the message are stated below. These 6 messages MUST include an answer to each of 4 study questions PLUS 2 replies to two other students.

2. Although you are free to post more, no more than 2 messages will be counted per day. The purpose of the rule is to insure that messages are distributed over the assignment period in order to allow for replies.

3. At least one third of the messages must be replies to other students' messages. Replies are evaluated using the same (except for one: see point 3 below, about length) criteria used to evaluate other types of messages.

Quality of Messages: In order to be counted toward your assignment grade, a message must:

(1) contain a relevant quote from the reading assignment. Messages that do not contain quotes from the text are not counted. All quotes must be placed in quotation marks and set off from the rest of the text of the essay by at least one empty line above and below the quote.

(2) contain a commentary on the quoted passage and a reason and justification for the statement or claim that the comment is making.

(3) be at least 300 words in length, for your initial responses to the study questions, and be at least 200 words in case of replies to other students' contributions. Long quotes over three lines in length are not counted in determining message length.

(4) attempt to answer the main discussion question in part or in whole.

(5) contain quotations that are short and relevant. The commentary should interpret the quote.

(6) contain good grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling.

Note to Students: Students are expected to meet the standards of collegiate academic writing in all Conferences and other assignments. It is your responsibility to express yourself clearly and properly. This usually requires rewriting and polishing a text several times. Experience shows that waiting until the day an assignment is due to produce a first draft often leads to disappointing outcomes for students and instructors.

Messages that do not conform to the above criteria will not be counted toward the total number of messages that a student posts. Students will be informed if a message is not acceptable. In that case, students are free to resubmit the message after making the appropriate changes. Messages can be revised any time.

Exams and Final Exam:

Three **hourly exams** will be given. The two highest grades will be recorded. Students will drop one hourly exam grade if all three exams are taken. A missed exam (**for whatever reason**) becomes the dropped exam. Students who miss more than one hourly exam will receive zero (0) credit for the missed exam.

All students **must** take the final exam. The final examination will be comprehensive.

Detailed instructions about the exams and the final exam will be provided at the beginning of the semester (see in Resources). Exams and Final Exam will be made available for a period of time during which you can decide when to take it. Once you start the exam or final exam, however, you will have a limited number of minutes to finish it (usually, 50 minutes). The questions will be multiple-choice and true/false questions and will be chosen by Sakai randomly from a large pool of questions.

Assignments & Schedule:

More detailed instructions concerning the exams, the readings and the study questions will be given in the appropriate conference area.

Date	Readings/Assignments
<p>May 21 – 24</p>	<p>First Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Ch.1: Beardsley and Beardsley: What is Philosophy? Plato: Defense of Socrates Ch.2: Reasoning Barker: Improving Your Thinking</p> <p>Online Assignments: Biography Sign all relevant documents (see “welcome” announcement in Sakai) Read all my messages and ask questions about the course format, syllabus, and so on.</p> <p>Post 2 gradable messages by May 22. Post 2 additional gradable posts by May 23. Post the remaining gradable messages by May 24.</p>
<p>May 25 – 29</p>	<p>Second Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Ch.2: Reasoning Cohen and Nagel: Fixing Belief Ch.3: Knowledge Russell: Appearance and Reality Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy</p> <p>Online Assignments: Post 2 gradable messages by May 26.</p>

	<p>Post 2 additional gradable posts by May 28. Post the remaining gradable messages by May 29 (noon).</p> <p>First Exam Due May 29 (midnight)</p>
May 30 – Jun.4	<p>Third Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Ch.4: Mind Ryle: The Ghost in the Machine Searle: Do Computers Think? Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy</p> <p>Online Assignments: Post 2 gradable messages by May 31. Post 2 additional gradable posts by Jun.2. Post the remaining gradable messages by Jun.4.</p>
Jun.5 – 8	<p>Fourth Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Ch.6: God Nagel: Does God Exist? Hume: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Handout)</p> <p>Online Assignments: Post 2 gradable messages by Jun.6. Post 2 additional gradable posts by Jun.7. Post the remaining gradable messages by Jun.8 (noon).</p> <p>Second Exam Due Jun.8 (midnight).</p>
Jun.9 – 13	<p>Fifth Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Ch.8: Morality Rachels: The Challenge of Cultural Relativism Cahn: A Supreme Moral Principle?</p> <p>Online Assignments: Post 2 gradable messages by Jun.11. Post 2 additional gradable posts by Jun.12. Post the remaining gradable messages by Jun.13.</p>
Jun.14 – 18	<p>Sixth Assignment</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p>

	Ch.10: Society Dewey: Democracy Hook: What Is a Liberal Education? Mill: On Liberty Online Assignments: Post 2 gradable messages by Jun.16. Post 2 additional gradable posts by Jun.17. Post the remaining gradable messages by Jun.18 (noon). Third Exam Due Jun.18 (midnight).
Jun. 20 - 22	Final Examination
Jun.29 (noon)	Grades Due

Participation Policy and Additional Information

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. One should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 874-2098 or the Academic Skill Center, 239 Shepard Building, Alan Shawn Feinstein Providence Campus, 401-277-5221.

As ongoing collaboration and dialogue are essential for effective online course delivery, it is imperative that students participate regularly. Those who do not participate regularly according to the guidelines outlined above may receive no credit for participation, and are subject to course failure at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Original Work: All work submitted must be written for this course during the term in which the course is being completed. Work from other courses or from other academic or non-academic settings, past or present, is not acceptable and may be subject to immediate failure. If students wish to submit extensively revised or expanded work previously submitted in this or another course, they must obtain the approval of the class instructor in advance. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense. Please, refer to URI's Student Handbook for guidelines concerning academic honesty. Use of TURNITIN: Please understand that in taking this course your assignments may be submitted to Turnitin.com and reviewed for textual similarity suggestive of plagiarism.

Discussion Concerning Syllabus: Because this is an electronic classroom and we are not reviewing the syllabus orally, the student is encouraged to discuss items within the syllabus. This discussion should clear up any ambiguous or vague language that may be in the document. It also serves to clarify the students understanding of course, expectations, goals and direction. If the student does not have questions or comments, then I will assume that there is understanding. There is no reason to feel intimidated about getting into a discussion. Post your questions and comments in the "General" conference.

The Academic Enhancement Center: The work in this course is complex and demanding. To do well, it is best to attend all classes, stay on top all assignments, review your notes regularly, and work with the students at the Academic Enhancement Center (AEC). The Center provides three services: Academic Coaching, Tutoring, and the Writing Center. To learn more about any of the se services, please visit web.uri.edu/aec or call 401-874-2367. In Providence, the Academic Skills Center (ASC) is at 239 Shepard Building, 401-277-5221.