

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

Spring 2026

PHIL 1301-001 (20975): Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Robert Sloan Lee, Ph.D.

Class Location: Ratliff Building South (RBS), Room # 1031 (campus [map](#))

Class Days & Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays --- 6:00 PM to 7:20 PM

Class Dates: 1/12/2026 - 5/2/2026

E-Mail: rlee@uttyler.edu

Secretary Phone: 903.566.7373

Virtual Office Hours: Fridays (2:45 PM to 3:45 PM) on Big Blue Button

Required Texts

Reading materials are provided for free Open Education Resource (OER) in Canvas.

Catalog Description

A survey of the major areas of traditional and modern philosophy: philosophies of knowledge, logic, value theory, and metaphysics.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. articulate the basic terms, methods, and questions of philosophy
2. explain the importance of philosophy
3. explain methods and disposition of a philosopher
4. identify key figures in the history of epistemology and metaphysics
5. discuss the relationship between certainty and knowledge
6. explain the tenets of empiricism
7. discuss the nature of justification
8. compare competing Western theories of reality and the self
9. articulate and critique arguments for and against the existence of God
10. explain competing accounts of meaning or value

Grading Scale

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = less than 60%

Grading

80% --- Quizzes

10% --- Final Test

10% --- Attendance and Participation

Assessments

Quizzes: Periodic in-class quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class period. The quiz average will be determined by dropping the lowest quiz grade and then dividing the sum of the quiz scores by the number of remaining quizzes. For example, if the student's quiz scores are 70, 80, & 90, then the quiz average would be 85 [that is, (80+90) divided by 2].

Final Test: There will be a final comprehensive test for the course composed of objective and fill-in-the-blank questions. A brief study guide will be released prior to the test.

Attendance and Participation: The attendance and participation credit awarded for any day of recorded attendance, and each day's credit is determined as an equal fraction of the total number of recorded attendance days with one free unexcused absence that does not count against the student's attendance grade. For example, if the class has met 10 days and a student has only one unexcused absence, then the student will receive full credit for attendance – with each class counting as 10% of their overall attendance grade. If the student had a second unexcused absence, then they would receive only 90 percent of the available credit for attendance. Excused absences will not count against the student's attendance and participation score, but they need to be accompanied by verifiable *documentation* (e.g. a doctor's note) which must be submitted when the student returns to class. Students will not see attendance points deducted in the grade book until the end of the semester. Further lack of appropriate academic engagement in the class can negatively impact a student's attendance and participation grade (e.g., leaving early, arriving excessively late, sleeping in class, listening to music during class, being on the phone or smartwatch during class, studying for other classes, reading for leisure during class, disruptive talking during class, and so on).

Course Policies

Late Work: Quizzes and tests must be taken during the class time on the days they are given. Make-up quizzes are only allowed under special circumstances (such as a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note).

Communication: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail (rlee@uttyler.edu). Students can expect replies within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. Students who do not receive a reply within this timeframe should attempt to contact the instructor again. The instructor communicates with the class via Canvas emails and announcements. It is important that students check their email and allow notifications for class announcements.

Class Conduct: All comments and behavior must be classroom appropriate. What does "classroom appropriate" mean? It does *not* mean that students cannot express unpopular opinions. It means practicing reasoning and logical discussion. It means being civil and listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, derogatory tones, sarcasm, ridicule, cussing, vulgarity, personal attacks, racial slurs, misogynistic remarks, etc. will not be

allowed. If you are unsure about what counts as disrespectful, consult the instructor or the Golden Rule. The instructor will act as the final word on what is or is not classroom appropriate. Violators may be ejected from the class.

Electronic Devices: Mobile devices cannot be used in the classrooms. If you have a laptop accommodation and plan to take notes on your device, please let me know at the beginning of the semester. They are permissible if they don't distract you or your classmates from the lesson and are being employed for class purposes.

Arriving Late or Leaving Early: Arriving on time can sometimes be challenging, but it is better to be late than never. However, late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive to others in the classroom (and excessive tardiness – or leaving class early – will impact the attendance grade). For this reason, please don't make a habit of it.

Extra Credit: Extra credit may be available from time to time on the quizzes. Extra credit is not available upon request, especially not during the last week of class.

Final Grade: Grades are final once the final grade percentage has been posted in Canvas at the end of the semester. No changes will be made unless the instructor has made a mistake. Grades are not bumped up unless the student is within .5% of the next letter grade. For example, an 89.5% is an A, an 89.4% is a B, and so on. The rounding up will not be reflected in the canvas gradebook, but will be reflected in the official grade postings. No extra credit opportunities will be given during finals week. The conditions for an "incomplete" are stated in the university handbook: "(a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due." The terms and deadline for satisfying an "incomplete" will be set by the instructor or by the head of the philosophy department.

Tentative Schedule of Topics

Unit 1: The Philosophical Disposition and Its Tools

This unit explores the purpose and tools of philosophy and illustrates the disposition of the philosophers and identifies Socrates as an important example of someone with that disposition.

Upon completing this module, students will be able to articulate the basic terms and questions of philosophy, understand the role of logical arguments and objections in the process of philosophical reasoning, and identify how one employs these methods, questions, and tools.

Unit 2: Epistemology

This unit explores questions related to rationality, justification, knowledge, and other ideas related to the general notion of cognitive success.

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to identify key figures in the history of epistemology, discuss the relation between certainty and knowledge, explain the tenants of empiricism and recount important arguments related to these issues.

Unit 3: Metaphysics – Philosophy of Mind

This unit explores questions related to the philosophy of mind.

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to compare competing theories of mind, perception and reality of reality and identify important historical figures and arguments related to those issues.

Unit 4: Metaphysics – Philosophy of Religion

This unit explores questions related to reality and the philosophy of religion.

Upon completing this module, students will be able to compare competing theories of perception and reality, identify important figures, and recount central arguments related to those issues.

Unit 5: Ethics

Overview: unit module explores ideas of moral theory.

Upon completing this unit, students will be able relate the idea of ethics to human nature, identify key figures in this discussion, and recount arguments related to these issues.

Unit 6: Meaning

This unit explores questions related to the meaning of life.

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to identify key issues and figures in this discussion and recount arguments related to these issues.

Honor Code and Other Links

[UT TYLER HONOR CODE](#)

I embrace honor and integrity.

Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

By enrolling in this class, you agree to abide by UT Tyler's honor code.

AI Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. For this course, AI is not permitted in this course at all. Work students submit for this course to be their own. The course is carefully designed for all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives.

[Spring 2026 UT Tyler Final Exam Schedule](#)

[UT Tyler Campus Map](#)

[UT Tyler - Fall 2022 Academic Calendar](#)

[Student Resources](#)

[University Policies and Information](#)

[2025-2026 UT Tyler Course Catalogue](#)