

# THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

## Course Syllabus

Summer 2025

PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy  
Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.  
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### Required Learning Material:

*Thirteen Theories of Human Nature, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*, by Stevenson, Haberman, Wright, and Witt, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0-19-086044-8

For the discussion board assignments, students are required to view [The Truman Show](#) (1998) and [The Matrix](#) (1999). These are available in the library and on some movie streaming apps.

### Catalog Description:

A survey of the major areas of traditional and modern philosophy: philosophies of knowledge, ethics, logic, aesthetics, 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 the job description and responsibilities of a philosopher.
4. identify key figures in the history of epistemology.
5. discuss the connection between certainty and knowledge.
6. explain the tenets of empiricism.
7. compare and contrast Eastern and Western theories of reality.
8. compare and contrast Eastern and Western theories of the self.
9. articulate and critique arguments for the existence of God.
10. discuss whether human nature is self-oriented or other-oriented.
11. describe the nature of true happiness.
12. explain the nature of human virtue.
13. discuss the idea of a social contract.

14. explain the basis for property rights.
15. explain and evaluate theories of justice.

## Grading Scale Percents:

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=less than 60%

## Grading:

Reading Quizzes (10 @ 20 points each):	180 points (lowest quiz dropped)
Movie Initiator Posts (2 @ 100 points):	200 points
Movie Response Post Assignments (2):	20 points
TOTAL:	400 points

## Assessment:

***Movie Discussion Board Assignment:*** There is a discussion board for each movie (2). You'll make a minimum of six contributions to each discussion board: 1 initiator post + 5 response posts = 6 total posts (minimum). The initiator post assignment has a separate due date from the response post assignment even though they are on the same discussion board.

[The Matrix](#) (1999) ([link](#) to library copy)

[The Truman Show](#) (1998) ([link](#) to library copy)

**INITIATOR POSTS:** You'll write one initiator post per movie. An initiator post is one that starts a thread based on the discussion prompt. A good post will make connections to the textbook and explain the philosophical ideas from the textbook clearly.

The post must be at least 300 words. There's no maximum word count, but keep in mind that grades are not based on quantity of words but on demonstrated comprehension and critical thinking. The grading rubric below shows exactly what is expected.

There must be at least one direct quote from the textbook. Quotes should be enclosed in quotation marks and followed with a parenthetical citation, such as:

Stevenson says, "yada, yada" (Stevenson, 36).

Of course, you'll need to explain the quote in your own words, too. You should always explain the meaning of quotes and not just drop them in, expecting them to do the work for you.

If you use quotes from outside sources (outside of class reading material), then a parenthetical citation must be included after the quote, and a full citation must be included at the end of the

post so that I can find the source. The citation must follow the Chicago Manual of Style. See [here](#) for CMS examples, and see below for how proper citations affect the grade.

You must post first in order to view other posts. The edit function will be disabled. If you want to edit after posting, you may reply in the thread with corrections or request that I delete the post. There must be a very good reason for deletion. For grading purposes, I consider your first post to be the initiator post even if it is blank or incomplete.

Late initiator posts can be turned in for a lower grade before the board officially closes. A late penalty of half a letter grade per day applies in each case unless accompanied by a valid excuse (e.g. a doctor's note that indicates a serious illness).

DISCUSSION BOARD RUBRIC (INITIATOR POSTS)	
0-25 points	There is at least one relevant direct quote from the textbook.
0-25 points	The explanation of the philosophical idea from the textbook is clear and accurate, and points of view are well-supported.
0-25 points	The connection between the movie and the philosophical idea in the textbook is plausible and carefully explained.
0-25 points	Grammar and spelling are polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style.

Additional points will be deducted for late initiator posts. No late initiator or response posts are accepted after the board closes.

Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. Plagiarized posts may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences. In short, do your own work, and be careful to give credit to the original author when you quote or paraphrase. You may use A.I. to study in this class, but you cannot use it to write your post for you. You must be the sole author of your posts.

**RESPONSE POSTS:** In addition to initiator posts, you'll write at least five response posts for each module (for a total of 6 weekly contributions: 1 initiator post + 5 response posts = 6). A response post is one that replies to a classmate's post and continues the conversation. One that ends the conversation or just says "I agree" in so many words does not qualify as a response. Good posts carry on the conversation in an interesting and relevant way and draw other students into the discussion. For example, you can ask questions, expand on points made, and disagree (with respect).

Posts under 50 words don't count toward the required number of response posts. If you happen to post a few that are under 50 words, just make sure to post a few extra posts that are 50 words.

Late response posts will not be accepted. Once the board closes, there are no further opportunities to complete the assignment, so it's advisable to post early to avoid unforeseen events such as last-minute technical problems. Encountering technical issues is not a valid excuse for late work unless the issues are the university's fault.

You may find this documentary on the Matrix helpful for the Matrix post if you can track it down: [Return to the Source](#) (2004). There is also a famous [collection of essays](#) about the Matrix.

## ***Reading Quizzes***

Reading quizzes can be found under the Quizzes tab in Canvas. There is a reading quiz for each chapter on the schedule of readings. These quizzes must be taken alone and without help from the Internet or A.I.

## **Tentative Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

### ***Module 1: China and India***

Overview: We will explore philosophical ideas found in Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Learning Objectives:

1. Assess different Confucian ideas on the moral constitution of human nature.
2. Explain and evaluate the Hindu idea *Atman is Brahman*.
3. Explain and evaluate the Buddhist idea of *dukkha*.

### ***Module 2: Greek Ideas, Part 1***

Overview: We will explore philosophical ideas that come from Plato and Socrates.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain Socrates' understanding of the job of a philosopher.
2. Distinguish between the different aspects of the soul.
3. Discuss Plato's political ideas from the *Republic*.

### ***Module 3: Greek Ideas, Part 2***

Overview: We will explore philosophical ideas that come from Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss and defend a perspective from the Euthyphro dilemma.
2. Define Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*.
3. Explain Plato's theory of knowledge from the *Meno*.

## ***Module 4: Abrahamic Religions***

Overview: We will explore ideas of human nature found in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain and evaluate the biblical concept of sin.
2. Describe the Christian solution to the human condition.
3. Define the *Khalifa* ideal in Islam.

## ***Module 5: Modern and Contemporary Periods***

Overview: We will explore ideas of human nature that come from Kant, Marx, and Sartre.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss Kant's doctrine of free will.
2. Evaluate Marx's theory of human nature.
3. Evaluate Marx's diagnosis of and prescription for the human condition.
4. Explain and evaluate Sartre's idea of human freedom.

## **Course Policies:**

***Late work policy:*** Assignments must be submitted by the deadline. A penalty of half a letter grade per day up to two letter grades will be assessed for late initiator posts. This penalty will be waived only under special circumstances (e.g. a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note). Late discussion board posts are not accepted after the board closes. Quizzes cannot be taken late.

***Communication policy:*** The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail ([gbock@uttyler.edu](mailto:gbock@uttyler.edu)) or in Canvas. 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 push notifications for class announcements.

***Class conduct policy:*** The subject matter of this class can make some people hot under the collar. This said, 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 argumentation. It means being civil and listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, cutting someone off, 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.

***Cell phone policy (face-to-face sections):*** Mobile devices can be used in the classroom if it is related to what is going on in class. If you have an electronic textbook or plan to take

notes on your device, please let me know early in the semester. They are permissible as long as they don't distract you or your classmates from the lesson.

***Arriving late or leaving early policy (face-to-face sections):*** 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. For this reason, please don't make a habit of it.

***Extra credit policy:*** Extra credit is not available in this class.

***"It is what it is" final grade policy:*** 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. 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.

#### [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.