

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

Fall 2026

PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.

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Phone: 903.566.7456

Office Hours: T/Th 12:30-2:00

Required Learning Material:

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley ISBN: 9780060850524

The Bhagavad Gita by Eknath Easwaran ISBN: 9781586380199

Plato's Five Dialogues 2nd Edition ISBN: 9780872206335

A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality by John Perry ISBN: 9780915144532

Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion 2nd Edition by David Hume ISBN: 9780872204027

Additional reading materials are provided electronically in Canvas

Course Overview:

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. 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:

Exams (4 @ 100 points each):	300 points (lowest dropped)
Group Presentations (1 @ 100 points):	100 points
Attendance:	50 points
TOTAL:	450 points

Assessment:

Exams: Each unit will conclude with a scantron (objective question) exam, which will cover the content of the readings from that unit. There will be no study guide, but students who complete the readings, participate in classroom discussion, and ask questions about things they don't understand can expect to perform well on the exams. In other words, the questions will not be difficult for students who are engaged in the class.

Group Presentations: After the second exam, students will present special topics and readings related to the current unit. Students will prepare slideshows that summarize the topics/readings and facilitate class discussions. The last slide of each presentation should include three questions, two of which are basic comprehension questions. The third question will be a question for the class to discuss. The two reading comprehension questions will appear (in a modified form) on the exam for that unit. The presentation will be 30 minutes – 15 minutes to present, 15 minutes to discuss.

Attendance: At the start of the semester, each student has fifty points for attendance and one free unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first is penalized **five points per day** against the attendance grade up to fifty points. Excused absences will not count against the fifty points but need to be accompanied with documentation (e.g. a doctor's note). This documentation must be submitted when the student returns to class and no later. After losing fifty points, no further points will be deducted even if there are more absences. Students may not see points deducted in the grade book immediately or even until the end of the semester, so it is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of attendance points remaining and make sure that the attendance sheet is accurate on a weekly basis.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Exams and presentations must be submitted on the day they are due. Make-ups are only allowed with valid documentation, such as a doctor's note.

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail (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. Habitual offenders may see their attendance grade lowered.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit is only available on rare occasions in this class. Take advantage of them when the opportunity arises.

"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.

A.I. and Plagiarism Policy: Please review the updated policy in the Start Here module in Canvas.

[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.

Calendar of Topics

8/25 What is Philosophy?

8/27 What is Philosophy? | *Brave New World*, first half

9/1 What is Philosophy? | *Brave New World*, second half

9/3 Plato's *Apology*

9/8 Plato's Allegory of the Cave

9/10 Plato's *Phaedo*

9/15 Plato's *Euthyphro*

9/17 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

9/22 **EXAM 1**

9/24 *Tao Te Ching*, Chapters 1-4 (online)

9/29 *Tao Te Ching*, Chapters 5-8 (online)

10/1 *Bhagavad Gita*

10/6 *Bhagavad Gita*

10/8 *Bhagavad Gita* / Assign Group Presentations

10/13 *Dhammapada* (online) | Group Work

10/15 **EXAM 2**

10/20 Descartes' *Meditations* (online)

10/22 Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity* / Group Presentation

10/27 Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity*

10/29 Utilitarianism | Class Cancelled -- Instructor at Conference

11/3 Kantian Deontology

11/5 **EXAM 3**

11/10 Aquinas' Five Ways (online)

11/12 Anselm's Ontological Argument (online)

11/17 Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts 1 and 2

11/19 Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts 3 and 4

THANKSGIVING

12/1 Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts 5 and 6

12/3 Tolstoy's *A Confession*

FINALS WEEK -- **EXAM 4**