

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
Phil 1301: Introduction to Philosophy
Summer 2026
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Matt Deaton, Ph.D.

Office: Home office; contact info below

Email: jdeaton@uttyler.edu (*I'll check this account every other day or so during the week, but for anything time-sensitive, please call my cell*)

Phone: 865-323-9773 (*personal cell – feel free to call during work hours, but do not text*)

Secretary Phone: 903.566.7373

Office Hours: Flexible and by appointment (if you're interested, please email – I'm sure we can work out a mutually convenient time to speak or Zoom)

Supervisor: Dr. Greg Bock: 903.566.7456 or gbock@uttyler.edu

Required Readings

- All reading materials are provided electronically on the course site.

Catalog Course Description

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

Prerequisites/Co-requisites

None

Course Outcomes

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. compare competing theories of justice
10. discuss existentialism and absurdism
11. engage in critical thinking, including articulating and evaluating arguments, both via oral presentations and in writing, and identifying and avoiding reasoning fallacies
12. articulate and critique arguments for and against the existence of God
13. explain competing accounts of ethics

Reading and Assignments Schedule:

Important: an Analysis/Reflection video of 4-5 minutes is due by midnight the date listed below for each assigned reading, and then a written response of 150 words to the reflection posted immediately

before yours is due by midnight the following day. For example, for an assignment due on July 8th, you'd post the link to your 4-5 minute video by midnight July 8th, then submit your 150-word written response to the video posted immediately before yours on the discussion board (which you'll see in the discussion board once you've posted your video) by midnight July 9th. Your video is worth max 7/10 points and your written response max 3/10 points for a total max 10/10 points (see additional guidance below). You may upload your video to YouTube and post the hyperlink (that way you have the power to delete it after the semester if you like), or upload it to the course site so long as it's playable without having to be downloaded (confirm once it's live that it's playable). If you happen to post your video after the midnight deadline but before the discussion board closes the day after, I'll dock 3 points. **Note that once a reflection response deadline closes (on the day peer response posts are due), I don't accept late work regardless of reason, so please plan accordingly.** However, I will drop your one lowest reflection, so one poor showing won't hurt your course grade. For the specific readings for this semester, click on the Discussion Board in the course site.

W July 8: Readings 1 video due by midnight – *these are all due by midnight – for the specific readings, see assignments schedule on Discussion Board*

R July 9: Readings 1 peer response due by midnight – *these are all due by midnight – for the specific readings, see assignments schedule on Discussion Board*

F July 10: Readings 2 video

Sat July 11: Readings 2 peer response

M July 13: Readings 3 video

T July 14: Readings 3 peer response

W July 15: Readings 4 video

R July 16: Readings 4 peer response

F July 17: Readings 5 video

Sat July 18: Readings 5 peer response

M July 20: Readings 6 video

T July 21: Readings 6 peer response

W July 22: ***TAKE EXAM 1 BY MIDNIGHT***

F July 24: Readings 7 video

Sat July 25: Readings 7 peer response

M July 27: Readings 8 video

T July 28: Readings 8 peer response

W July 29: Readings 9 video

R July 30: Readings 9 peer response

F July 31: Readings 10 video

Sat Aug 1: Readings 10 peer response

M Aug 3: Readings 11 video

T Aug 4: Readings 11 peer response

W Aug 5: Readings 12 video

R Aug 6: Readings 12 peer response

F AUG 7: *TAKE EXAM 2 BY MIDNIGHT*

SATURDAY, AUG 8: *SUBMIT COURSE PROJECT PAPER BY MIDNIGHT*

Grading Scale Percentages

A = 90-100% B = 80-89.99% C = 70-79.99% D = 60-69.99% F = 59.99% or below

Grade Distribution

Video Reflections and Written Peer Responses: 40% Final grade

Exam One: 25% Final Grade

Exam Two: 25% Final Grade

Course Project: 10% Final Grade

Assignments

4-5 minute Analysis/Reflection Videos and 150-word Peer Responses

4-5 minute Analysis/Reflection Videos: For every group of assigned readings, I'll post a specific prompt for you to answer in video form on the discussion board due by midnight on the schedule on the discussion board. **Do not read an AI-generated script. Do not read a human-generated script.** Instead, read the reading, watch any available videos I've shared, read any available notes I've shared, review the prompt, reflect, organize your ideas in bullet point form (boiling them down to post-it note size is ideal – you can even post your post-it note outline on your laptop or smartphone to make referencing as you record easy), and hit record on your smartphone or laptop camera. If you're not happy with your first take, re-record. If you're under 4 minutes or over 5 minutes, re-record (second, third, and fourth takes are almost always easier and better than first takes anyway).

- Briefly consulting notes from time to time is OK, but look into the camera lens as much as possible (this helps you practice eye contact for professional meetings in the future and minimizes script reading)
- Ensure you're on camera for the full video (no PowerPoints needed or desired)
- Do not edit your video (record in one take – minor mistakes are OK)
- Ensure it's within 4 to 5 minutes (so you adequately answer the prompt, yet don't belabor your points or make watching your video too time consuming)

Options for uploading and sharing:

1. Create a free YouTube account, upload each video there, setting them to "unlisted" (but not "public," which anyone on the internet could find and watch, or "private," which would block the class from viewing without a password), and then share the link in a discussion board post.
 - a. Ensure you complete this early enough to account for slow uploading (trying right before midnight would lead to a late submission).

2. Or if you'd like to avoid YouTube, upload your videos directly to the course in your post – **just make sure they're playable without having to be downloaded** (a viewer should be able to click play on the course site discussion board).
 - a. Account for uploading speed (don't wait until right before midnight)
 - b. Ensuring your video is playable without having to be downloaded is your responsibility – just visit your post once it's live and ensure you can watch it immediately, and if you can't, troubleshoot and try another method.
 - c. Unplayable videos are worth zero points.

So long as your video indicates that you **read, reflected on and seriously engaged** the assigned reading(s) using your organic human brain (see my AI usage note below – it's OK as a tutor-like aid, but not as a replacement for your earnest thoughts), **you fully answer the prompt(s), and it meets the time goal requirement**, you will receive full credit (7/10 for your video). I'm not asking for perfection, just thought and honest reflection – meaning it's obvious from your post that you read the assigned material and thought a bit about the assigned question before replying. Demonstrate that, and you'll get full credit. Please don't attempt to simply wing it after watching the lecture video – schedule time to read firsthand and you'll get far more out of the class.

150-word Written Peer Response: Once you've posted a reflection video, you'll have access to others' posts on the discussion board (unless you're the first poster, in which case you'll need to come back). Find the video of the person **who posted right before you**. Just look at the order of posts, the dates and times, where yours is, and focus on the one posted right before yours. If you'd like to watch and comment on others' videos, you may. But you'll only be graded on your reply post for the one right before yours. **Two exceptions:**

* If you're the first person to post, obviously, no one will have posted prior to you. So, come back later (before the deadline) and post a reply to the person who posts immediately *after* you instead.

** If the video posted prior to yours is unplayable for any reason, do two things: 1) email that student and let them know it's unplayable and Cc me (include me in the email so I know that they're video isn't playable and that you alerted them). 2) Reply to the second person to post prior to you instead, beginning with, "I'm commenting on your video because the video posted immediately prior to mine was unplayable." If that one is also unplayable, just go to the next up.

How to post: click reply to their post. Using your organic human brain, author a written response to their video that includes three things:

1. One thing you found yourself in agreement from what they said.
2. One thing which you found yourself in disagreement from what they said.
3. One thing you found especially interesting or insightful from what they said.

To receive full credit, your written peer response post should:

- Be at least 150 words (going over 150 is OK, but going under is not)
- Indicate that you sincerely listened to this person (**quoting them at specific times in their video is the best way to do this: "You said at that the 45-second mark that..."**)
- Indicate that you're able to competently discuss the ideas from that assigned reading(s)
- Be at all times respectful (even if you firmly disagree with this person on some point, maintaining a respectful tone is required in a philosophy class – feel free and encouraged to disagree, but do so respectfully)

Your video is worth 7/10 points max, and your written peer response worth 3/10 points max.

Exams

You'll take two exams **per the schedule in this syllabus**. Each will build on the previous, such that the second will be cumulative. Unless I announce otherwise, the exams will be made up of multiple choice and true/false questions. Though I'm not a tough grader on the weekly reflections, expect the exams to be difficult. Prepare as you would for any in-person test. Note that while you may consult your notes, the course texts, my notes, etc. during the exam, you are expected to not consult with one another, or any other person, or AI, or otherwise do things that would undermine the purpose of an exam – to evaluate your mastery of the material, and yours alone. My ability to monitor this is limited, so decide for yourself how proud you'd like to be of your course grade. The exams will also be timed, so bring your A game. Should you have questions about the material beforehand, please ask – I'm here to help.

Attendance and Make-Up Policies

Since this is an online course, attendance (usually relevant for financial aid reporting and sports coach accountability purposes) is determined according to discussion board participation and exam completion. There is no separate grade for attendance or participation beyond your direct discussion board and exam grades.

The discussion board is a “post first” forum, meaning that you must submit your response to a given week's reflection prompt before you can see the responses of others. This is to encourage original thought and direct engagement with the course materials – to prevent being overly influenced by the thought of others before you've had a chance to develop your own initial view. Given that I'll often post “collective feedback” in which I'll pull quotes from and provide commentary on select submissions, **late reflections are not accepted**. Having a flat, no late reflections policy allows me to treat all excuses equally. Good news – I'll drop your lowest reflection grade, so you can miss one without grade penalty.

Please mark the exam due dates in your personal calendar and plan to study for and complete them with time to spare. **The point penalty for taking Exam late is 15 points if completed within the first calendar day late (meaning the max score would be 85/100), 30 points if completed within the 2nd calendar day late (max 70/100), and 50 points if completed between the 3rd and 5th calendar days late (max 50). Once the 5th calendar day after an exam deadline has passed, there are no make-ups, and a zero is recorded. And since Exam Two is scheduled at the end of the semester, right before course grades are due, the latest exam 3 could be taken is one day late, with a 15-point penalty.**

Given that the course project is due right before the end of the semester (when I'll need to calculate and upload final course grades), **course project papers may only be submitted late until noon the morning after they are due via email attachment, and will incur a penalty of 35 points. After noon the day after they're due, a zero will be recorded** (sorry – I have to calculate and submit course grades).

Course Project

*****This course project asks you to complete readings on a topic that we did not cover in the class and use them, along with at least two other assigned readings from the class, to write a paper using your organic human brain in which you'll author an ethical argument of your own. Full directions and a grading rubric are on the course site under Assignments -> Course Project Paper. Please review that now and email or call should you have questions.*****

Plagiarism Warning

“Plagiarism” is passing off someone else’s work as your own. This includes the work of your classmates, as well as ideas you might find in books or on the Internet. Consulting outside sources is admirable. Copying and pasting language from outside sources without noting them as a source and/or failing to place direct quotes within “quote marks” is not admirable, and will earn you a zero for the assignment, and/or an F for the course -- both for your weekly reflections and the Course Project.

Philosophy isn’t the easiest thing to do when you’re new at it. But it’s not super hard, either, and therefore completely within your reach. If you’re having difficulty coming up with what you consider a quality submission for this or any other assignment, email or call me – promise I can help – don’t resort to plagiarism. Your dignity is worth more than 10 silly points, and your professor is here to help you – take advantage.

Professor Matt’s AI Statement: While you’re expected to abstain from using AI when taking the exams, consulting AI as an on-demand tutor is OK with your reflections and course project paper, provided that you’re putting in earnest work with your organic human brain first and continue to do so. This means reviewing and thinking about the readings on your own first, reviewing and thinking about the reflection prompts on your own first, reading the project paper articles and sketching a rough draft of your paper on your own first. Leveraging AI as a complementary tool is appropriate in a class like this only when you’re giving your human mind a thorough workout. You want to not only be proud of your course grade and diploma, but to substantially grow from your college experience. In my philosophy classes especially, you don’t need to resort to AI cheating to do well. Set aside adequate time to complete your assignments, begin developing your reading and thinking stamina, and trust yourself to do a good enough job. Put another way: You’re welcome and encouraged to use generative AI as a personal tutor on any topic we cover. If you’ve not dabbled with ChatGPT (it’s free), start before the world leaves you behind. However, on all graded assignments, do your own reading, thinking, writing and test-taking – even if you consider yourself a poor writer and/or philosopher, this is OK, because you’re a work in progress. Use AI to help you learn, but ensure any work you submit is genuinely your own. Ask it questions you’d ask me, such as, “I read x article and I think the author was arguing y. Is that right?” Then ask follow ups. “Ok. But what about the section where he mentions z? That seems inconsistent with his overall view.” Really, it’s a wonderful on-demand, free personal tutor. Use it for that purpose alone and you’ll speed your learning and amplify your skill. Use it as a CheatBot to do your work for you and you’ll wind up no smarter than when you arrived, and ashamed of rather than proud of your diploma. If you ever have any questions about legit vs. not legit usage of AI in my class, please ask.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MUST APPEAR IN EACH COURSE SYLLABUS

Important Covid-19 Information for Classrooms and Laboratories

Students are required to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth, and follow social distancing guidelines, at all times in public settings (including classrooms and laboratories), as specified by [Procedures for Fall 2020 Return to Normal Operations](#). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code](#) and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, or a higher than normal temperature will be excused from class and should stay at home and may join the class remotely. Students who have difficulty adhering to the Covid-19 safety policies for health reasons are also encouraged to join the class remotely. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu.

Recording of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

Students Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors.

Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products.

There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructor has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)