

Phil 1000 - Introduction to Philosophy
Philosophy as a Way of Life
Section 401 TR 11:30-12:50, AAB 114

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When the normal course of everyday life offers very little satisfying to our natures, when we regularly feel the dull aches of bad work, empty leisure, and disoriented politics, then philosophy becomes not just the practice of the few but the need of the many.

–Scott Samuelson, The Deepest Human Life

In this class, and at this college, we come from a wide variety of social, personal and community locations: the first-generation college student; the vet; the aspiring worker returning to reimagine a new career; the gifted, straight-A student interested in saving money; the recovering addict; the on-the-task professional and the off-the-couch gamer; the welcomed and the marginalized; the over-scheduled and the under-inspired.

We come from everywhere, and we are the *stuff* of philosophy. We struggle for meaning and self-purpose. We seek happiness and a good life. We try to make our mark, stake our claim, and find our place. We ache to belong and participate in worlds we make and remake.

We are philosophers.
(we just might not know it yet).

The Idea of This Course

One of the directors of the National Endowment of Humanities institute on Reviving Philosophy as a Way of Life helpfully describes the philosophical approach that inspires this class:

“The idea of Philosophy as a Way of Life is really returning to an ancient idea of what philosophy was when it was practiced by Plato, and Socrates, and Aristotle. For them, you wouldn’t study philosophy like you do today where you would go into your philosophy class, and then you would go into your economics class, and then you would go into your physics class. Philosophy was more like an overarching way of life, and you would study philosophy because you were looking for insights into how to live well and how to be a good person.”¹

¹ Stephen Grimm, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Philosophy, Fordham University. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3XM8fcj3rs>

This class takes its jumping-off point from that idea: that philosophy has something to contribute to a life well-lived. We explore a variety of philosophical “Ways of Life”: The Examined Life (Socrates), the Awakened Life (Buddha), the Pleasurable Life (Epicurus), The “Authentic” Life (Sartre), and many more. We hone the tools of philosophical inquiry: reasoning and logic, conceptual clarity, intellectual generosity, and—well—a “love of wisdom.”

We do so, not just to collect knowledge of different philosophical theories (which is of course nice to have), and not just to learn critical reasoning skills beneficial for our other classes, careers and life-long pursuits (which they are). We do so, to explore how philosophical views and practices affect, inspire, make meaningful, and make-real the day-to-day lives we live.

A big part of this class, then, is about *engaging with* the practices of different philosophical ways of life, in order to see how belief inspires action, knowledge inspires commitment, metaphysics inspires ethics. We will try out gratitude meditation, create an Epicurean online dating profile, plan a Kantian dinner, and more. And as we explore our “philosophical exercises” within the various Ways of Life, we will be aiming, ultimately, to understand, articulate, and evaluate our own philosophical lives.

Welcome to the semester.

Required Texts:

- CR Course Reader:** A collection of essays, available on our course Canvas site. Print these essays out. There is NO TEXTBOOK to buy.
- NB Journal Notebook** (spiral or journal-y): This will be used for your Philosophical Journal. You can also make this a computer document if you prefer to type your entries in, but there’s something nice about taking the time to handwrite (e.g. the act of putting pen to paper, the extra time it takes to articulate a thought by hand, etc.)

Canvas

Our Canvas Course Site has just about every important document, assignment, reading, resource, etc. for this class. It is where you will turn in your assignments, download readings and assignment instructions, engage in extended group discussions, and the like. Make sure that you are familiar with how to navigate the site.

Course Objectives

- Students will learn from the history of Western philosophy: from the earliest Greek stages through major contemporary movements.
- Students will come to understand the major philosophical issues, problems, and positions, (including, for instance, those concerning the nature of reality, morality, the existence of God, the major modern epistemological schools, and existential and post-modern schools, as possible subjects for discussion).
- Students will learn the principal methods of philosophical investigation including the basics of argument critique, through the analysis of primary philosophical texts.

- Students will begin to learn the process and methods of expressing themselves concerning the strengths and weaknesses of important philosophical positions and arguments.
- Students develop critical thinking skills through exposure to the rudiments of logical inference in the creation of arguments and through the analytical evaluation of presented arguments.
- As the course follows the historical development of Western Philosophy, students will improve the comparative & synthesizing skills, by contextualizing individual philosophical paradigms.
- A central component of the course is political philosophy including issues of what makes democracy valuable, rights, social justice, etc. Students gain important civic knowledge in grappling with these issues.
- Students are asked to question their own personal philosophies and biases, with the intention of intellectual and moral self-improvement and becoming more conscious citizens.

Course requirements

Module Activities (7 at 3 pts each)

Throughout the semester, you will be required to turn in **SEVEN “Module Activity” assignments** (due dates are on the reading schedule). For each MA, you will find instructions on our Canvas course page, under the “Assignments” tab (or within each Module under the “Modules” tab). There will be at least 9 of these to choose from, so you can choose to skip some. (But I recommend not skipping any of the first four, since they are “scaffolding” (step-by-step support) for your first Signature Assignment) (also, don’t rely too heavily on the possibility that there will be more than 9. Right now, I only have 9 planned).

- **Purpose:** These are designed to be creative and interesting ways to engage the philosophies we are encountering. They are aimed to achieve several goals: a) to continue or build off of philosophical exercises that we started in class-workshops; b) give you a chance to individually reflect on the exercises; c) offer (dare I say) fun ways to engage with the ideas of our philosophers, d) break larger projects into smaller stages; e) explore the implications of philosophical approaches to issues, etc. In short, they are about doing cool stuff with the ideas we’re coming across. They are meant to be creative and substantive, fun and engaged.
- **Point-Value:** Each assignment will be worth **3 points of your final grade for a total possible of 21 points**. Each MA asks different sorts of things, so the grading criteria will depend on the assignment itself. You will always be able to find a rubric (a table with the criteria I consider while grading) on each MAs page.
- **Format:** These are to be submitted on Canvas, under the respective MA pages.
- **Late Policy:** These are due by classtime (11:30 a.m.) of the date listed. These cannot be turned in late. If you miss one, you cannot make it up...you’ll just have to pick one of the other MAs still open.

Philosophical Spotlights (2 at 5 pts each)

At the end of each of the major units of the class, you will have the opportunity to turn in a “**philosophical spotlight**” of one of the philosophers, or a major theme or concept, from that unit. There are four opportunities (the last one allows you to choose to spotlight a philosopher or school of philosophy that we didn’t cover in class), you are to submit **TWO**.

- **Purpose:** These are designed to allow for a bit of creativity, exploration, and expressive attention, tapping into a variety of modes of expression. They are also meant to give you an opportunity to apply philosophical principles, concepts, and/or practices to your own experiences or interests. While you are welcome to choose a design/approach from your own mind, here are a few ideas:
 - **Poster/Flyer:** for these kinds of activities, I ask you to design a one-page “poster” that presents (through images and words) a central point/concept/idea from one of the philosophical ways of life. The purpose here is to allow you to filter concepts through varying modes of experience and expression. (Often, students use a blank PPT slide to design their poster, then take a screen shot of it and upload that as an image. But how you design it is up to you.)

- **Short video or other multi-media:** Another possible type of Philosophical Spotlight would be to create a short video exploring one of the ways of life and its exercises/concepts/etc. (about five minutes long). There may be flip videos or other cameras that can be checked out, and there may be editing software available to you as a student at SLCC, so check with me on that.
- **A physical artifact of some kind:** A sculpture, a painting/drawing, a diorama. ☺ or whatever. If you choose to create a physical artifact, make sure to also write up a couple paragraph description of how it represents/expresses your chosen philosophical idea, person, etc.

Whichever type of Philosophical Spotlight you choose to design, you will be choosing **one of your two to present on your ePortfolio.**

- **Point-Value:** Each assignment will be worth **5 percent of your final grade for a total of 10 percent.** When I grade these, I'll be looking to see if you have correctly and specifically explained or presented concepts and/or philosophers, used textual support where appropriate, attended to the aesthetic dimensions of the assignment (e.g. made it look pretty and professional).
- **Format:** Open, but professional and visually appealing is key.
- **Late Policy:** every day late is 1/3 of a grade penalty (for instance, from an A to an A- to a B+ to a B, etc) I may grant an extension for you but **only** with at least two-days advance notice. If you come to me on or after the due date asking for an extension, you will subject to the late penalties.

Tests (3 at 10 pts each).

There will be **THREE Tests** covering the material from the previous section, and consisting of True/False, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, and short and long essays.

- **Point-Value:** each is worth **10 percent**
- **Format:** Each exam is in-class and a combination of multiple-choice, short essay and long essay. Prior to each test, I will upload a review guide to help you prepare.
- **Late Policy:** These exams cannot be made up unless you have a documented, excused absence (i.e. doctor's note for the date in question), or if you make PRIOR arrangements with me to take the exam in the testing center. If you come to me after the exam, without an excused absence, asking to make it up, you will not be able to.

Signature Assignment 1: Student Apologies (1 at 10 pts)

At the beginning of Week Six, you will submit this first of 2 signature assignments. Your student "apology" should be between 3-5 pages long, and should follow the specific instructions available under the Assignments Tab of our Canvas page.

- **Purpose:** The Greek meaning of "Apologia" is actually pretty much the opposite of what we typically think of by that word. ...Indeed, at best, one could say that, in philosophy, the "Apology" is the epitome of the "**Sorry, *not* Sorry**" statement: a clearly explained and justified, unapologetic *defense* of my life against those who might accuse me of not living well, of not caring about the right things, of doing what I shouldn't and not doing what I should, etc. Generally Speaking, "a philosophical "apology" is a text that both articulates *what* the author believes on some particular matter, and offers arguments for *why* she is rational in believing as she does, all within the context of a larger personal narrative. It's sort of like a philosophical memoir with arguments."²
- **Point-Value:** This SA is worth **10 points (10% of your final grade)**. The grading criteria can be found in the Student Apology grading rubric (on Canvas, under the Student Apology Assignment).
- **Format:** This should be in essay-format. (if you want to use another style, run it by me), and is to be submitted on Canvas. It should be formally formatted (12 pt font, normal margins, proper writing mechanics, clean look)
- **Late Policy:** every day late is 1/3 of a grade penalty (for instance, from an A to an A- to a B+ to a B, etc) I may grant an extension for you but **only** with at least two-days advance notice. If you come to me on or after the due date asking for an extension, you will subject to the late penalties.

² Meghan Sullivan, professor at Notre Dame, explains the Student Apology assignment in these words.

Signature Assignment 2: Your Philosophical Way of Life (1 at 15 pts)

At the end of semester, you will submit this second signature assignment. Your PWOL should be between 4-7 pages long, and should follow the specific instructions available under the Assignments Tab of our Canvas page.

- **Purpose:** The idea of this SA is to evaluate, assess, draw from the semester's "models" of Philosophical Ways of Life in order to: a) articulate what it means to call a WoL a "philosophical" way of life; b) to develop your own concrete answer to what "my philosophical way of life" might be like: what techniques/practices could/ would you use to enact/embodiment a philosophical approach to life: to your other classes? To your personal life? To your jobs? To your life in the public world?; c) to analyze and evaluate at least two Ways of Life covered during the semester.
- **Point-Value:** This SA is worth **15 points (15% of your final grade)**. The grading criteria can be found in the Student Apology grading rubric (on Canvas, under the Student Apology Assignment).
- **Format:** This is the fun part: The format is a **Diary/Journal/Blog Entry**, written from the perspective of you, 3 years later, having lived according to your Philosophical Way of Life. This diary entry will include a staged **photo** of yourself, and an **imagined conversation** (i.e. quoting and paraphrasing our philosophers) with two proponents of ways of life you think won't work for you. This is to be submitted on Canvas, and **one other artifact** (a video, a playlist, a ticket stub (from that 3-years-in-the-future imagined-timeline). It should be formally formatted (12 pt font, normal margins, proper writing mechanics, clean look). More detailed instructions will be on Canvas.
- **Late Policy:** every day late is 1/3 of a grade penalty (for instance, from an A to an A- to a B+ to a B, etc), up until the end of finals week. I may grant an penalty-free extension for you but **only** with at least two-days advance notice. If you come to me on or after the due date asking for an extension, you will subject to the late penalties.

ePortfolio (5 pts)

All General Education classes at SLCC—including this one—require that you upload "Signature Assignments" to a "General Education ePortfolio" that you create. A Gen-Ed Portfolio is a kind of academic/professional website where you upload key assignments from your General Education classes, and reflect on those assignments and the class (like, for instance, how they connect to other general education courses and your career/education/life). In our class, you will be uploading one of your Signature Assignments, and one Philosophical Spotlight assignments.

Your ePortfolio should include four elements:

- 1) a reflection essay (expect to write at least two substantive paragraphs) that attends to at least two of the question-sets I have provided for you on Canvas, and introduces the contents of your ePortfolio page.
- 2) your uploaded Signature Assignment, with an explanation of the assignment.
- 3) One Philosophical Spotlight assignment (or Module Activity) that you are particularly pleased with, each with an explanation about what the assignment was, and what you did.
- 4) attention to visual presentation

You can find instructions, and a sample ePortfolio, on our course's Canvas site, under Signature Assignment Resources folder, and the submission page for the ePortfolio. If you haven't started an ePortfolio at SLCC yet, don't feel daunted. There is A LOT of support for getting your site up and running, including **free workshops**, a **brochure** full of information, and/or **step-by-step video tutorials**. I've included links to these resources on our course Canvas page, as well as instructions for how to write the reflection section and how to design your PHIL 1000 page. When I grade your ePortfolio, I will be evaluating it according to a rubric which considers the quality of your reflection essay, your Signature Assignment paper upload, the presentation of your chosen Philosophical Spotlight, and the general formatting and aesthetics of the PHIL 1000 page of your ePortfolio. Your ePortfolio **can be submitted after the due date, for a late penalty, but only up until the end of finals week.**

Journal, Workshops and Participation (10 pts)

This course is pretty much designed around in-class engagements – aka “philosophical exercises” – with the Philosophical Ways of Life we are encountering. So participating in engaged, prepared and substantive ways is a key part of success in the class, and will be primarily evaluated on the basis of your presence (i.e. attendance), preparedness, attentiveness, engagement, and respectful and thoughtful listening and commenting. Your **journal** is a part of this larger engagement: I will usually have us start a journal reflection in class, and have you continue it at home. Each class meeting where a journal entry was assigned, I will record its completion on a “complete/partial/not complete” range. The journals will often be based on small “philosophical experiments” that I ask you to reflect on afterwards)

- **Point-Value: 10 points (10%) of your final grade** will be based on your participation
- **Note:** I understand that people participate in different ways, but there are some minimum, **non-negotiable expectations** from me—that each brings their texts and reads before class, that an attempt is made by the quieter ones to offer their perspectives, that an attempt is made by the confident speakers to include the less confident, and that there is an appreciation and respect for other viewpoints and people.

Readings Assignments

Each class, you will be assigned articles or a section of a text to have read before the next class. (you can find these assignments on the reading schedule—the date under which the reading is listed is the date *by which* you are expected to have read it). Each reading is available on Canvas, within a given Module folder, or on the Collected Readings page. You do not need a textbook. But you do need to **print your readings out and bring them with you to class**. We WILL use them in class.

- **Allow Time to Read:** While I’ve broken the readings down into manageable and relatively accessible excerpts, the reading load is still sufficient to require that you plan in advance enough time to read. If you leave it to the last minute, you won’t get it done.
- **Point-Value:** reading and preparation affect all aspects of your grade in a class like this. For just two instances, you need to have read in order to successfully complete the MAs and the Spotlights; and our in-class workshops are often going to be directly engaging the texts, and if you have not read, you will be noticeable and uncomfortably unprepared to participate. However, officially, your reading and preparedness are **reflected in your participation grade**, with the following additional policy:
- **Preparedness Policy:** All students will be required to **come to class with the assigned texts in hand, and having already read them**. If I notice a pattern of not bringing your text or of not being prepared, I will speak to you about it. Once I speak with you, further failures to bring your text or be prepared will be counted as ABSENCES, whether you are physically in-class or not.

Grade Breakdown

Module Activities (7 @ 3 pts)	21
Phil Spotlights (2 @5 pts)	10
Tests (3 @ 10 pts each)	30
SA Student Apology	10
SA Your Philosophical WOL	15
ePortfolio	5
Participation/Journal	<u>10</u>
Total	101

Total Point Values

A	94-101
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
E	0-59