

# Brandeis University

## Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 1A - 1

Instructor: Peter Lupu

Summer School 2024

Syllabus

**We Will learn Philosophy by Doing  
Philosophy**

**“Understanding comes first; there is always time  
for judgement!”**

## 1. Instructor Contact Information:

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## 2. This course fulfills the WI (*Writing Intensive*) Requirements.

This is a writing intensive course. As a writing intensive course, it features a variety of writing assignments that are designed to foster students' skills vital to (i) reading comprehension; (ii) conducting research in Philosophy (and other fields); (iii) working with preliminary outlines designed to produce coherent and well-organized essays and papers in Philosophy (and other fields); and (iv) clearly and thoroughly express complicated thoughts.

Students will be assigned a variety of writing assignments, essays, and papers such as:

- a. **Reflective essays on the reading material:** this assignment is designed to enhance comprehension of reading material;
- b. **Critical Review of Original Papers:** this assignment is designed to teach students how to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Philosophical theories and original positions of Philosophers;
- c. **Designing and Working with Paper Outlines:** this assignment is designed to foster in students the skill of writing well organized and coherent papers, including writing a bibliography;
- d. **Writing a Thesis Statement:** this assignment is designed to teach students how to put in writing a clear thesis statement;
- e. **Independent Research reports:** this assignment is designed to enhance students research skills;

f. **Writing an Abstract:** this assignment is designed to teach students how to write a clear summary of a paper;

g. **Term Paper:** this assignment is designed to give students the opportunity to put all previously learned skills into practice by writing a longer paper, which includes an abstract, an outline of the paper, a thesis statement, critical review of original articles, independent research, and a bibliography.

**Notes: Students will receive thoughtful comments on assignments as needed and you will be asked to submit appropriate revisions on some assignments.**

### 3. Writing Intensive Learning Goals and Objectives.

- To acquire conceptual skills that enable students to understand complex questions, situations, and develop problem solving techniques;
- To acquire and enhance critical thinking skills such as the ability to analyze, synthesize, critically evaluate ideas, theories, hypotheses, and worldviews;
- To learn how to do independent research so as to enable students to contribute to philosophy and other disciplines;
- To acquire writing skills that enable students to write clear, coherent, well organized, and persuasive essay narrative;
- Learn how to critically examine original research papers and evaluate their own written work.

### 4. Course Specifications.

- Course begins on June 5, 2023 and ends on August 11, 2023.
- This course is *synchronous* conducted entirely on the Latte online platform.
- ***No book is required for this course:*** All materials will be supplied on the Online Platform.
- Credit Hours: 4 credit hours.
- Class Times: synchronous Online; required. Zoom meetings:  
TuTh 6:30pm – 8:30pm (ET)

- Roughly **10 hours per week** spent out-of-class in preparation for class, in-depth reading assigned material, and complete assignments (and other projects, if needed).

## 5. Course Description:

Philosophy is about exploring *conceptual possibilities* as solutions to philosophical problems. The philosophical problems themselves arise from reflection on our existence in this world and the practices in which we engage. Philosophy, then, is a certain way of thinking about ourselves, the world around us, and our relationship to this world. You will read more about how I view philosophy in my class notes. Some of the of topics we will explore in this class are;

(1) **Philosophy of Religion:** Does a Perfect God exist? If so, what is the *nature* of this God and how can we come to *know truths* about such a deity?

(2) **Metaphysics:** Who are we? What is the nature of our mind and its relation to our physical existence? Do we have free will? What is free-will and is it even possible?

(3) **Epistemology:** What is knowledge? Do we have any knowledge? If so, how do we acquire knowledge?

(4) **Ethics (and some Political Philosophy Themes):** Is there a distinction between moral right vs. wrong? How should we live? Why should we be moral? What justifies the authority of any ruler to rule over another person? Should a society adopt the principle of tolerance or free speech? Why?

## 6. Grading Scale:

97 – 100	A+
93 - 96	A
90 – 92	A-
87 – 89	B+
83 – 86	B
80 – 82	B-
77 – 79	C+

73 – 76	C
70 - 72	C-
60 – 69	D
59% or less	E.

## 7. Academic Integrity.

“Academic integrity is central to the mission of Brandeis University. As stated in "Rights and Responsibilities," "Every member of the university community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student's own effort."

Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are: no credit for the work in question, failure in the course and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the university. During an investigation students are not allowed to drop the course in question. Semester class drop deadlines will be suspended for the duration of the investigation. If the student is found responsible and the sanction delivered is not more severe than failure of the assignment(s) in question, the student may drop the course.

It is one of the chief obligations of each member of Brandeis' academic community to understand the university's policies regarding academic honesty and to uphold those standards.

Allegations of academic dishonesty by undergraduate or graduate students are reported to the [Office of Student Rights and Community Standards](#) for adjudication within the Student Judicial System.

## 8. Accommodations:

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. IF you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with **Student Accessibility Support (SAS)** (781-736-3470, <mailto:access@brandeis.edu>.) You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

## 9. Course Requirements.

### *Attendance:*

Attendance in the synchronous weekly Zoom meetings (TuTh 6:30pm – 8:30pm ET) is required. Attendance in the Zoom class meetings is required. Missing too many meetings will require a legitimate excuse.

### *Assignments:*

There will be several different types of assignments in this class:

### *Quizzes;*

There will be several quizzes throughout the term;

### **Outlines:**

Students will be asked to submit outlines of reading assignments as well as outline of papers assigned.

### *Essays;*

There will be several essays and writing assignments throughout the term;

### *Papers:*

There will be a project paper that will be prepared in stages throughout the term.

### **Paper-Essay Rubric:**

	0	1	2	3	5
Criteria	Less than 200	200+	200+	200+	200+
Grammar, spelling, punctuation:	10 or more mistakes	8 or more mistakes	6 or more mistakes	4 or more mistakes	0-3 mistakes
Clarity:	Completely unclear	Very unclear	Moderately unclear	Somewhat unclear	Clear

Structure:	Completely unstructured	Very unstructured	Moderately unstructured	Somewhat unstructured	Well structured
Scope:	Completely misses the essay's question	Misses large part of the essay's question	Misses a important aspects of the essay's question	Misses some aspect of the essay's question	Covers all parts of the essay's question

Note: The exact points depend on the overall value of each essay. This may vary depending on the nature of the essay or paper and therefore the points will likewise vary. The above rubric presents a sample of point assignment.

## 10. Participation.

Participation in class discussions is crucial for the success of your own learning as well as enhancing the learning dynamics of the whole class. Learning is a step-by-step process that involves many crucial stations. The steps are as follows:

- **Reading:** preparing for the class by reading all the assigned material carefully, writing notes and questions.

*Reflect on this:*

**“Reading is the Oxygen of the Brain!”**

- **Engagement:** Engaging in class discussions is critical. Learning takes place by means of many modalities. Asking questions, discussing, and debating issues, and responding to your colleague's points is a way of immersing yourself in the material by means of conversation. Conversing, including expressing your position on a question, defending it when challenged, responding to questions, etc., are all ways of learning through the public domain of discourse.

*Reflect on this:*

**“Do not be afraid to ask questions!”**

- **Reviewing Material:** After each class meeting, it is useful to review the material covered in the class. Doing so enables you to revisit the material and dig deeper into subtle aspects that may not have emerged during the class.

*Reflect on this:*

**“Learning is much more than Remembering!”<sup>1</sup>**

- **Assignments:** It is imperative to submit assignments on time so that the learning flow proceeds smoothly and the preparation, readings, engagement, review of material is coordinated with the assignments.

*Reflect on this:*

**“The Value of Grades is Instrumental; the value of Learning is Foundational.”**

## 11. Latte.

LATTE is the Brandeis learning management system. Login using your UNET ID and password. For LATTE help, contact [Library@brandeis.edu](mailto:Library@brandeis.edu).

## 12. Library.

[Brandeis Library](#) collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty, and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional services, Archive & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

## 13. Privacy.

To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use pseudonym/alias. You must share the pseudonym/alias with me and any teacher assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

## 14. Student Support.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bloom’s Taxonomy in the Course Introduction in Latte.

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the [Support at Brandeis](#) webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:

- The [Care Team](#)
- [Academic Services](#) (undergraduate)
- [Graduate Student Affairs](#)
- Directors of Graduate Studies in each department, School of Arts & Sciences
- [University Ombuds](#)
- [Office of Equal Opportunity](#)

## Syllabus Supplement

### Weekly Course Plan: (May be adjusted as needed)

#### 1. Week 1:

#### Introductory Material & Critical Thinking and Some Logic

##### *A. General Introduction to the Course and to Philosophy.*

- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.

##### *B. Introduction to Philosophy of Religion I*

- General Introduction to the Philosophy of Theism.

- Faith vs. Reason.
- Reading Assignments.
- Videos

## 2. Week 2: Philosophy of Religion II:

### *Introduction to the Proofs for the Existence of God.*

- The Cosmological Argument.
- The Teleological Argument.
- The Ontological Argument.
- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.

## 3. Week 3: Philosophy of Religion III:

- *The Problem of Evil.*
- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.
- Quiz: Covering all of Philosophy of Religion I, II, III.
- Essay: Covering all of Philosophy of Religion I, II, III.

## 4. Week 4: Metaphysics I:

### *Introduction to metaphysics.*

- *The Problem of Personal Identity.*
- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.

## 5. Week 5: Metaphysics II:

- *The Mind Body Problem.*
- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.

## 6. Week 6: Metaphysics III:

### ➤ *Free-Will and Determinism.*

- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.
- Quiz: Covering all of Metaphysics I, II, III.
- Essay: Covering all of Metaphysics I, II, III.

## 7. Week 7: Midterm:

- No Reading Assignments.
- Paper.

## 8. Week 8: Epistemology/Theory of Knowledge:

### *The Problem of Knowledge: Radical Skepticism: Justification.*

- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.
- Quiz: Covering all of Epistemology I, II.
- Essay: Covering all of Epistemology I, II.

## 9. Week 9: Ethics:

### ➤ *Ethical Theory.*

- Reading Assignments.
- Videos.
- Quiz: Covering all Ethical Theories.
- Essay: Covering all Ethical Theories.

## **10. Week 10: Final & Final Paper:**

- **Final Exam Quiz:** Covering all the material throughout the term.
- **Final Paper:** Topic to be Announced.

**Note: The Weekly Course Plan is subject to change given unforeseen circumstances and/or course requirements.**

**The Assignments Schedule is presented in class.**

**Self Esteem Comes from Achievement;**

**Not the Other Way Around.**

**(Mary Jo Small)**

**Enjoy!!!**