

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-2023

Phil1350F: Reality & What We Can Know of It

Tues 11:30–1:30, Thurs 11:30–12:30
Classroom: V214 (Huron)
Office: Lucas House Annex

Instructor: Emerson Doyle
email: edoyle9@uwo.ca
Hours: Wed 1:00–3:30 or anytime via Zoom

Course Description

In this age of fake news, climate change denial, global pandemics, anti-vaxxers, and our political and social leaders becoming ever-more willing to stretch the truth or deny facts outright, the study of epistemology and metaphysics is ever-more relevant. Many of these issues, and much of what we take ourselves to “know” about reality in general, depend upon fundamental but often unexamined philosophical assumptions. Should we trust an expert’s testimony or predictions? Can we trust our memories and perceptions? Our intuitions? Logic and mathematics? Science or faith? Can we be sure beliefs formed by these methods correspond to reality? Just what is real? Perhaps this is all a dream? From where do logical and ethical truths arise? We assume we have free will, that there are other minds, scientific facts, an external world—but how can we be sure? Such assumptions help us to make sense of our lives, but quickly evaporate upon philosophical reflection.

In this course we will examine some of these questions and the philosophical issues at their foundations. Our goal is to equip ourselves with tools and conceptual frameworks useful for navigating these issues, that we may attentively confront the realities of our modern age.

Course Objectives & Methods

Students should finish the course with an appreciation of just how much our daily affairs are underpinned by philosophical convictions, as well as the means to critically evaluate those convictions. You will also have the opportunity to improve your writing, critical analysis, and argumentative abilities. These are extremely valuable skills not just for success in academia, but also within the personal and professional spheres more generally.

Although this course will consist primarily of lectures, class discussion will be of key importance throughout. Students will be expected to attend **every** class having done **all** of the readings, and to regularly make contributions to the discussion. *I encourage you to see me with any questions or to recommend alternate approaches; while I will do my best to encourage a safe and positive atmosphere in the classroom.* In my experience courses are successful when everyone is engaged and comfortable making contributions—you must be an **active participant** in your education.



Texts

- Course readings will be posted on OWL.

One of the key outcomes of this course is learning how to confidently and successfully approach and read academic material. Academic—especially philosophical—writing is often dense, involving new or complex concepts and arguments. The course is designed to teach us strategies for reading in a productive and *active* way. While everyone here knows how to read, active reading is a new skill that must be learned and mastered. We'll learn how to approach dense articles together, and explicitly discuss methods for breaking them down and making them understandable.

Requirements

- Active Learning: 10% (in-class activities, group work, and short assignments)
- Writing Assignments: 36% (1 essay and 2 assignments)
- Final Essay: 24% (5 pages maximum)
- Final Exam: 30% (during the Fall exam period)

Active Learning will include group discussions/activities during class, take-home assignments, and contributions to Forum discussions. Something will be offered most weeks—you must complete to a high quality 10 such activities to get full points.

Writing Assignments are designed develop skills in critical reading, argument analysis/development, focused thesis construction, and staying on topic. Putting all these pieces together has the potential to much improve your academic writing overall. Late work submitted without arrangement with me **in advance** will be penalized by **5% per day late**, including weekends.

The **Final Essay** will be a more substantial argumentative piece, giving you the opportunity to demonstrate all the philosophical skills learned throughout the course. Potential topics will be distributed in advance, but speak with me if you are eager to write on a different topic. Due the last day of class. Late work submitted without arrangement with me **in advance** will be penalized by **5% per day late**, including weekends.

The **Exam** will occur during the Fall exam period. This will be a “take-home” style assignment done over the course of one full week, requiring a demonstration of understanding and a significant synthesis of course content.



Schedule

*Please be advised that the reading list is tentative.

- Week 1 (Sept 08) **Introductory Week**
- Salmon, “A Contemporary Exposition of Zeno’s Paradoxes”
- Week 2 (Sept 13/15) **The First Philosophical Puzzles**
- Lindberg, “The Greeks & the Cosmos”
- Week 3 (Sept 20/22) **What is Knowledge?**
- Plato, selections from *Theaetetus*
 - Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
- Week 4 (Sept 27/29) **How are Beliefs Justified?**
- Descartes, *First & Second Meditations*
 - Locke, “No Innate Principles in the Mind”
 - J. Nagel, “Rationalism & Empiricism”
- Week 5 (Oct 04/06) **Let’s Hear What the Experts Say... (which experts? why believe them?)**
- J. Nagel, “Testimony”
 - Anderson, “Democracy, Public Policy, and Lay Assessments of Scientific Testimony”
- Week 6 (Oct 11/13) **Switch Topics! — Metaphysics: Is There An External World?**
- Berkeley, “Reality Consists of Ideas”
 - Russell, “The Existence of Matter”
- First Writing Assignment (essay) due October 13th — 12%**
- Week 7 (Oct 18/20) **Why do we Assume the Universe is Made of *Things*?**
- Guttinger, “A Virus is Not a Thing: The Case for a Process View of Viruses”
 - Bickhard, “Issues in Process Metaphysics”
- Week 8 (Oct 25/27) **But Don’t Things Cause Other Things?**
- Hume, “Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion”
 - Mumford, “What is a Cause?”
- Second Writing Assignment (reflection) due Friday October 29th — 10%**
- Week ☹ (Nov 01/03) **No Class — Reading Week!! (whew!)**
- Week 10 (Nov 08/10) **So What of Science!?**
- Whewell, “Against Pure Empiricism”
 - Whewell, “The Causes Behind the Phenomena”
 - Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations”
- Week 11 (Nov 15/17) **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**
- Turing, selections from “Computing Machinery & Intelligence”
 - Searle, “Can Computers Think?”

Third Writing Assignment (arguments) due November 17th — 14%

Week 12 (Nov 22/24)

What of Conscious Experience?

- Russell, “On Analogy”
- T. Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”
- Chalmers, introduction to “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”

Week 13 (Nov 29/
Dec 01)

But There Must Be a Self... Descartes & Locke Said So!

- Hume, “Of Personal Identity”
- Mumford, “What is a Person?”

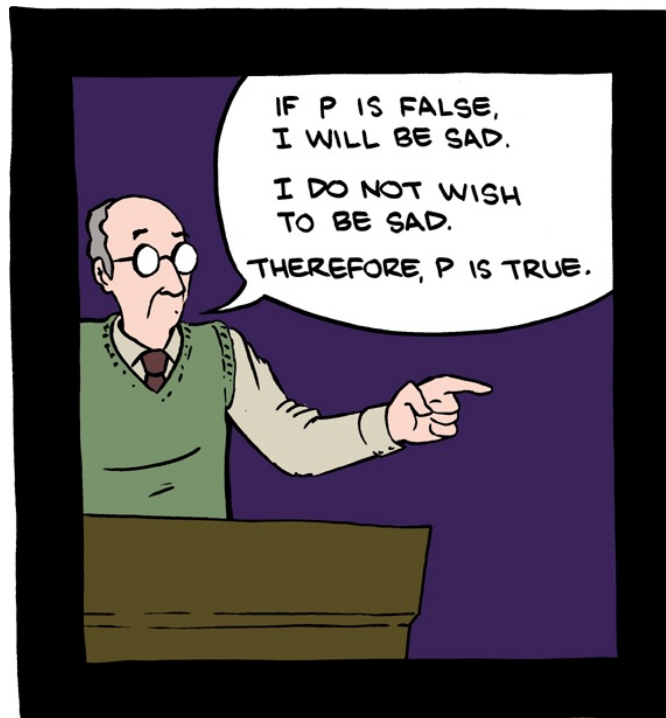
Week 14 (Dec 06/08)

Is Philosophy Important?

- Goldhill, “Why are so many smart people such idiots about philosophy?”
- Goldhill, “Bill Nye, the science guy, says I convinced him that philosophy is not just a load of self-indulgent crap”
- Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”

Final Essay due December 08th — 24%

Final Exam during Fall Exam Period — 30%



There. Now you can skip 99% of philosophical debates.

Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022

Pandemic Contingency

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no further disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/academic_calendar/)

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: [Academic](#)

[Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) .The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may not collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

b) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [accommodation medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services at

huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>
 Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>
 Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>
 Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>
 Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>
 Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Wellness and Health Supports at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca
 Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca
 Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)