

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Undergraduate Course Outline 2018–2019

Phil1350G: Reality & What We Can Know of It

Winter Term 2019
Mon/Wed 12:30/1:30–2:30
Room: V214 (Huron)

Instructor: Emerson Doyle
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Office: Lucas Alumni House, RM1 (Mon, 11:00–12:30)

Course Description

In this age of fake news, climate change deniers, conspiracy theorists, 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 reality 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.

You will be expected to come to class not only having done the readings, but also having critically reflected upon them. Philosophical writing is often dense, involving difficult and complex concepts and arguments. I recommend going over the readings once quickly. After this cursory examination, reflect on the main ideas, highlight any unclear words or passages, and write down any questions that you may have. Next give the material a second, closer reading, attempting to answer your questions and understand the concepts you found difficult the first time. Finally, bring your outstanding questions to class for discussion.

Requirements

- Free Responses: 10% (10 responses each worth 1%)
- Short Papers: 60% (4 pages maximum, three papers + two reflections)
- Final Exam: 30% (during the Winter exam period)

Free Responses will offer you the opportunity to respond to **anything** related to the content of the class discussion or readings for the week. These responses will usually be completed in the last 5–15 minutes of class on Wednesdays, after short group discussions. While there is no length requirement, your thoughts should be substantial. The goal is to give you a chance to engage with the material and respond to what we have done *for yourself*. I will occasionally offer a question or topic to help guide your response, but following this prompt is optional. These responses must be handed in via email by Noon on the Thursday after class. Each response is worth 1%. There will be **no opportunity** to hand these in late or if you miss class.

Paper topics will be distributed at least two weeks in advance. In your essays you will be expected to clearly state and effectively **argue** for your thesis. I encourage you to see me at least once during the development of each paper, and to visit the Writing Centre. You will receive substantial comments on your first two papers (worth 15% each). You will then be tasked with completing an assignment (worth 5%) asking you to reflect upon those comments. The final short paper will be worth 20% with no reflection assignment required. Late work submitted without arrangement with me **in advance** will be penalized by **5% per day late**, including weekends.

The **Exam** will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office during the appropriate exam period. Besides review on the last day, we will schedule an additional exam review outside the class schedule.



Schedule

*Please be advised that the reading list is tentative.

Week 1 (Jan 07/09)

The Beginning—The First Philosophical Puzzles

- Lindberg, “The Greeks & the Cosmos”
- Parmenides, “Being is Not Temporal”
- Salmon, “A Contemporary Exposition of Zeno’s Paradoxes”

Week 2 (Jan 14/16)

What is Knowledge & How is it Justified? (Wed: Writing Phil. Papers)

- Plato, selections from *Theaetetus*
- Descartes, *First & Second Meditations*
- Locke, “No Innate Principles in the Mind”
- Nagel, “Rationalism & Empiricism”

Week 3 (Jan 21/23)

What is Knowledge & How is it Justified?—Continued

- Continued from last week.

Week 4 (Jan 28/30)

Should We Trust Testimony? (Mon: Reading Phil. Papers)

- Lackey, “Knowing From Testimony”
- Nagel, “Testimony”

First Short Paper due on January 30th — 15%

Week 5 (Feb 04/06)

Some Further Puzzles—Scepticism & Relativism

- Sextus Empiricus, selections from *Outlines of Scepticism*
- Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion”
- Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge”

Week ♡ (Feb 11/13)

Some Solutions?

- Lewis continued
- Bland, “Scepticism, Relativism, & the Structure of Epistemic Frameworks”

Reflection on First Paper due on February 13th — 5%

Week ☹ (Feb 18/20)

No Class — Reading Week!! (whew!)

Week 8 (Feb 25/27)

Let’s Back Up A Minute... Causation & Induction

- Russell, “On Induction”
- Hume, “Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion”
- Mumford, “What is a Cause?”

Week 9 (Mar 04/06)

*Drop Date Mar. 7

So What of Science!?

- Whewell, “Empiricism & Causes”
- Darwin, “The Explanatory Scope of the Evolutionary Hypothesis”
- Maxwell, “The Ontological Status of Theoretical Entities”

Second Short Paper Due on March 06th — 15%

Week 10 (Mar 11/13)

We Can Be Sure About Mathematics, Right?

- Hahn, “Is There an Infinity?”
- Russell, selections from *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*

Week 11 (Mar 18/20)

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

- Searle, “Can Computers Think?”
- Russell, “On Analogy”
- Cohen, “If Not Turing’s Test, then What?”

Reflection on Second Paper due on March 20th — 5%

Week 12 (Mar 25/27)

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

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

Week 13 (Apr 01/03)

Self-Identity and Social Context

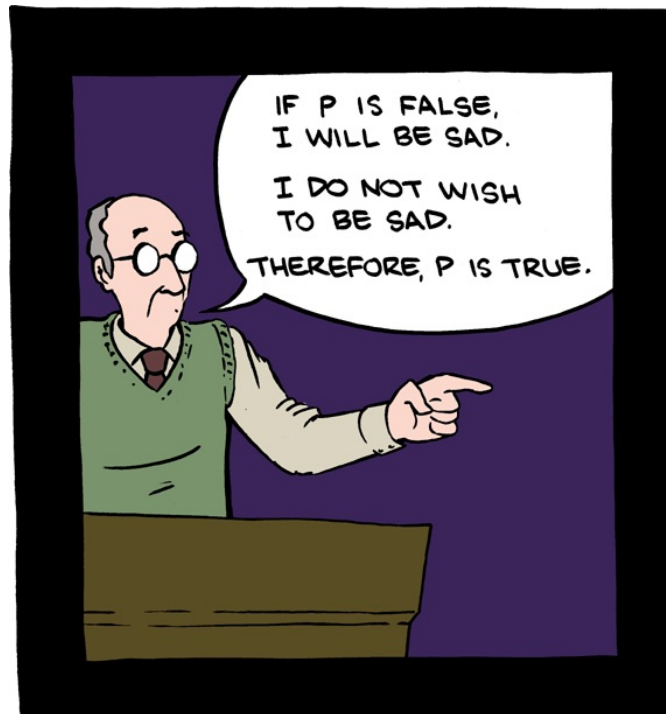
- Appiah, “ ‘But Would That Still Be Me?’...”
- Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They?...”

Week 14 (Apr 08)

Overflow, Exam Prep., & Review

Third Short Paper due April 8th — 20%

Final Exam during Winter Exam Period — 30%



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



Appendix to Course Outlines

Prerequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Provost and Dean to enrol 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.

Conduct of Students in Classes, Lectures, and Seminars

Membership in the community of Huron University College and the University of Western Ontario 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. The academic and social privileges granted to each student are conditional upon the fulfillment of these responsibilities.

In the classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Students can avoid any unnecessary disruption of the class by arriving in sufficient time to be seated and ready for the start of the class, by remaining silent while the professor is speaking or another student has the floor, and by taking care of personal needs prior to the start of class. If a student is late, or knows that he/she will have to leave class early, be courteous: sit in an aisle seat and enter and leave quietly.

Please see the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/StudentLifeandSupportServices/StudentDiscipline>

Technology

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is 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.

Academic Accommodation for Medical/Non-Medical Grounds

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

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

University Senate policy, which can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf,

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:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform_15JUN.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 Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and Dean.

**(b) Accommodation on Medical Grounds for assignments worth less than 10% of final grade:
Consult Instructor Directly**

When seeking accommodation 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. 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. 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 Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and Dean.

(c) Non-medical Grounds: Consult Instructor Directly

Where the grounds for seeking accommodation are not medical, the student should contact the instructor directly. Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor. Apart from the exception noted below, academic advisors will not be involved in the process of accommodation for non-medical reasons.

Where a student seeks accommodation on non-medical grounds where confidentiality is a concern, the student should approach an academic advisor with any documentation available. The advisors will contact the instructor after the student's request is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the challenge without breaching confidence. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified that significant circumstances are affecting or have affected the student's ability to complete work, and the student will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. Before denying a request for accommodation where documentation has been submitted to an academic advisor, the instructor will consult with the Provost and Dean. The instructor's decision is appealable to the Provost and Dean.

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 Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Statement on Academic Integrity

The International Centre for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals to action." (CAI Fundamental Values Project, 1999).

A lack of academic integrity is indicated by such behaviours as the following:

- Cheating on tests;
- Fraudulent submissions online;
- Plagiarism in papers submitted (including failure to cite and piecing together unattributed sources);
- Unauthorized resubmission of course work to a different course;
- Helping someone else cheat;
- Unauthorized collaboration;
- Fabrication of results or sources;
- Purchasing work and representing it as one's own.

Academic Integrity: Importance and Impact

Being at university means engaging with a variety of communities in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge and understanding in ways that are clear, respectful, efficient, and productive. University communities have established norms of academic integrity to ensure responsible, honest, and ethical behavior in the academic work of the university, which is best done when sources of ideas are properly and fully acknowledged and when responsibility for ideas is fully and accurately represented.

In the academic sphere, unacknowledged use of another's work or ideas is not only an offence against the community of scholars and an obstacle to academic productivity. It may also be understood as fraud and may constitute an infringement of legal copyright.

A university is a place for fulfilling one's potential and challenging oneself, and this means rising to challenges rather than finding ways around them. The achievements in an individual's university studies can only be fairly evaluated quantitatively through true and honest representation of the actual learning done by the student. Equity in assessment for all students is ensured through fair representation of the efforts by each.

Acting with integrity at university constitutes a good set of practices for maintaining integrity in later life. Offences against academic integrity are therefore taken very seriously as part of the university's work in preparing students to serve, lead, and innovate in the world at large.

A university degree is a significant investment of an individual's, and the public's, time, energies, and resources in the future, and habits of academic integrity protect that investment by preserving the university's reputation and ensuring public confidence in higher education.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will suffer consequences ranging from a grade reduction to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. In addition, a formal letter documenting the offence will be filed in the Provost and Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Provost and Dean's Office for the duration of the student's academic career at Huron University College.

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.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

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.

Policy on Special Needs

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at:

http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

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 Provost and 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 Provost and Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Class Cancellations

In the event of a cancellation of class, every effort will be made to post that information on the Huron website, <http://www.huronuc.ca/AccessibilityInfo> (“Class Cancellations”).

Mental Health @ Western

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Academic Advising

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation [see above], students should contact an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services (huronsss@uwo.ca). An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/AcademicAdvisorsandServices>

Department Chairs and Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about their individual programs. Their contact information can be found on the Huron website at:

<http://www.huronuc.ca/Academics/FacultyofArtsandSocialScience>