



# Intro to Philosophy Syllabus

Introduction to Philosophy, PHIL 1301-8156  
CRN: 17829

Fall 2016, Web-Enhanced (3 Credit Hours)

HCC – Northwest College

Alief Hayes Campus, Room TBA

Tu, Th 11:00AM – 12:30AM

Instructor: J. Christopher Jenson, Ph.D.

Learning Web Page: <https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/jason.jenson>

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Office hours: Tues. & Thurs. 1:00pm - 4:00pm  
or by appointment on Alief Hayes Campus.  
Room # TBA.

## Course Description:

This course is a study of the major issues in philosophy and/or the work of major philosophical figures in philosophy. Topics in philosophy may include theories of reality, theories of knowledge, theories of value, and their practical applications (Texas ACGM). It provides a theoretically diverse introduction to the study of ideas, including arguments and investigations about abstract and real phenomena, particularly in the areas of knowledge, ethics, and religion (HCC Course Catalogue). This course stresses the HCC Core Objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

## PREREQUISITE(S):

- ENGL 1301 or higher

## HCC CORE CURRICULUM:

This course satisfies the **Philosophy, Language, and Culture** component area or the **Component Area Option** in the HCC Core Curriculum. If you are not sure that you need this course to graduate, please consult with your advisor.

## Student Learning Outcomes:

1. **Read, analyze, and critique** philosophical texts.
2. **Demonstrate knowledge** of key concepts, major arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.
3. **Present** logically persuasive arguments both orally and in writing.

**4. Demonstrate critical thinking skills** in evaluation and application of philosophical concepts to various aspects of life.

**5. Evaluate** the personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world.

### **Required Reading:**

There is no required textbook for this course. All reading materials for the course will be Online Educational Material (OEM). For reading assignments you will either be given a URL link for the article on the web or a link to a downloadable PDF file. These will be found on the course reading schedule available on under the modules tab on your Eagle Online Canvas course page. You may print them out if you wish or read them on your laptop, tablet, or other device. Please bring the assigned readings for each class session to class.

One of the most important professional development skills you will achieve in college is reading comprehension and your ability to evaluate arguments, and reinterpret them in your own words. Please embrace this challenge! You are expected to carefully read the assigned material before class. All reading material and the schedule is in MODULES, in Canvas. It helps to take notes when you are reading, and to formulate argument outlines and objections. The reading material will also fulfill background information, and aid in the quality of informed discussions. Quizzes on reading will be counted towards your Participation grade.

### **Notice About Online Learning Management Software:**

This is a *web-enhanced* lecture course that uses *Eagle Online Canvas*. The *Eagle Online Canvas* login page is:

<https://eagleonline.hccs.edu/>

Your Eagle Online username is your HCC email address. Your password is the same password you use to log in to PeopleSoft, HCC Webmail, and Active Directory (computer terminal login). For any questions about your Eagle ID or password, please go check online [www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-e-maileagle-id/](http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-e-maileagle-id/).

NOTE: Eagle Online works best with the latest version of Mozilla Firefox. Download it free, [www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/](http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/). (Please check your Operating System to see if you have Firefox in your applications.)

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: <http://www.hccs.edu/online/technical-support/> or 713-718-5275

### **Assessments and Grading:**

There are three types of assignment.

Attendance	40% of total course grade
Weekly Response Assignments (Canvas)	30% of total course grade
Three Argument Essay Assignments (Canvas)	30% of total course grade

## Attendance

Philosophy cannot be done by simply memorizing facts. The history of philosophy can be thought of as one long conversation. In order to do philosophy, one must participate in this conversation by discussing philosophical issues in class. ***It is vital that you attend class.*** The lectures will go well beyond assigned reading. **You will get 2 excused absences no questions asked, no excuse necessary.** Any additional absences will only be excused for emergency situations or official HCC events and I will require appropriate documentation. For example, a doctor's note excusing you on the day and time of class (NOTE: HIPAA guidelines protect the privacy of you and other's medical information. I am not asking for specifics of illness or other personal information. I am asking that your medical professional provide a note saying you could not attend class as a matter of a Doctor's directive); a letter from a court magistrate requiring your appearance on the day and time of class; a letter from a coach/director of an official HCC event explaining your absence on the day and time of class; a towing receipt with location and time for your broken down car; a letter/flyer from a funeral home; and so on. Oversleeping, missing the bus/ride, needed at home, having to be at work, personal appointments, vacations, etc., do not count as emergencies. Your attendance percentage will be calculated using the following formula: (number of class sessions attended)/(total number of class sessions - excused absences). That percentage will be weighted as **40% of your overall course grade.**

HCC Students are expected to attend class regularly. A daily record of absences will be maintained throughout the semester. NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to drop, or officially withdraw from this course. Your instructor will withdraw a student if and only if provided a written request from that student. Additionally, system-wide rules affect withdrawals:

- (1) Students who repeat a course for a third, or more times, may face a significant tuition/fee increase at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities.
- (2) The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting new students (those starting college in Fall 2007) to no more than six total course withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. There may be future penalties imposed.
- (3) No student may withdraw from a course following the set "last date to withdraw. After that date and time, a student can only be given a grade earned, or an "I" for incomplete. Incompletes must be made up by the end of the following long semester, after which they will automatically change to a grade of "F". Students receiving an "I" for a course are ineligible for graduation until the "I" has been removed from a student's transcript.

### Academic Calendar:

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/events-calendar/academic-calendar/>

## Weekly Response Assignments

Each week you will complete one or two response assignments in the ASSIGNMENTS in CANVAS. The responses will ask you to write a few paragraphs on an assigned activity, such as watching a YouTube, listening to a podcast, taking a unit quiz, doing logic puzzles, or taking interactive ethics quizzes. All instructions are found in ASSIGNMENTS on Canvas. Unless stated otherwise, **ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE SUNDAY by 11:59 pm.** (NOTE: Canvas time stamps your submissions. Do not wait until the last minute. Give yourself plenty of time to make sure your assignment is submitted properly so that the time stamp shows that you have completed the assignment on time.) Any assignment submitted after this time will be considered

late. **Late assignments will receive a 10% penalty. You may complete late weekly response assignments up until the last day of class. After the last day of class no Weekly response assignments will be accepted.** Each weekly response assignment will be worth 20 points. Your points will be totaled at the end of the semester and you will receive a percentage score. That percentage will be weighted as **30% of your overall course grade.**

### Argument Essays

An argument essay involves summarizing an argument from a philosopher or other thinker and developing your own arguments in response. You will write 3 argument essays. Each essay will be approximately 800 words long (2-3 typed double-spaced pages). The third argument essay will count as your final exam for the course. Topics, instructions, tips, and due dates will be posted on Canvas. **Late essays will be penalized by 10%**, but you may turn them in up until the last day of class. The third essay will be due during finals week and will not be accepted late. Each essay will be worth 100 points. Your points will be totaled and your argument essays grade will be given as a percentage. That grade will be weighted as **30% of your overall course grade.**

### Grading Policy

The term grade legend follows:

A = 90% to 100%	4 GPA points per semester hour
B = 80% to 89.9%	3 GPA points per semester hour
C = 70% to 79.9%	2 GPA points per semester hour
D = 60% to 69.9%	1 GPA point per semester hour
F = 0% to 59.9%	0 GPA points per semester hour
FX (Failure due to non-attendance)	0 points per semester hour
IP (In Progress)	0 points per semester hour
W (Withdrawn)	0 points per semester hour
I (Incomplete)	0 points per semester hour
AUD (Audit)	0 points per semester hour

IP (In Progress) is given only in certain developmental courses. The student must re-enroll to receive credit. COM (Completed) is given in non-credit and continuing education courses. FINAL GRADE OF FX: Students who stop attending class and do not withdraw themselves prior to the withdrawal deadline may either be dropped by their professor for excessive absences or be assigned the final grade of "FX" at the end of the semester. Students who stop attending classes will receive a grade of "FX", compared to an earned grade of "F" which is due to poor performance. Logging into a DE course without active participation is seen as non-attending. Please note that HCC will not disperse financial aid funding for students who have never attended class.

Students who receive financial aid but fail to attend class will be reported to the Department of Education and may have to pay back their aid. A grade of "FX" is treated exactly the same as a grade of "F" in terms of GPA, probation, suspension, and satisfactory academic progress. To compute grade point average (GPA), divide the total grade points by the total number of semester hours attempted. The grades "IP," "COM" and "I" do not affect GPA.

NOTE: Philosophy Tutoring is available at <https://hccs.upswing.io> Please use it if you need it.

## **Academic Honesty:**

Learning to give credit through proper citations is an important skill you may need throughout your chosen career. The currency of academics and scientists is their ideas. This means that if you do not give them credit for their ideas, you are stealing. I will provide instruction for proper citation and bibliography. I will be vigorously looking for plagiarism in your assignments. Be advised that I may be employing Turnitin plagiarism detection software ([http://turnitin.com/en\\_us/higher-education](http://turnitin.com/en_us/higher-education)). Its database includes 60+ billion websites, 600 million+ student papers, and 154 million+ journal articles, periodicals, and books. The first time you are caught plagiarizing you will automatically fail the assignment and receive a warning. The second time you are caught plagiarizing you will fail the course and be subject to disciplinary action within HCC guidelines. The following website explains HCC's stance on plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-handbook/> (See the section on “Scholastic Dishonesty”)

Other useful websites on this topic are <http://plagiarism.org/> and <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/1/>

## **Students with Disabilities:**

The HCC Disabilities website is located at the following url:<http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/disability-services/>. You will find information about the types of assistance offered to students with special instructional needs on that web page. You will also find contact information for your college’s ADA compliance and accessibility office. For questions, please contact Donna Price at 713.718.5165 or the ADA counselor at your college campus.

## **Title IX Policy:**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 requires that institutions have policies and procedures that protect students' rights with regard to sex/gender discrimination. Information regarding these rights is on the HCC website under Students-Anti-discrimination. Students who are pregnant and require accommodations should contact any of the ADA Counselors for assistance. It is important that every student understands and conforms to respectful behavior while at HCC. Sexual misconduct is not condoned and will be addressed promptly.

Log in to [www.edurisksolutions.org](http://www.edurisksolutions.org) sign in using your HCC student email account, then go to the button at the top right that says Login and enter your student number.

## **Student Services:**

For information on student services including counseling, academic advising, financial help, child care, library services, etc. I encourage you to go to the student handbook website <http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/student-handbook/>

## **EGLS3 – Evaluation for Greater Learning Student Survey System:**

At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful student feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time near the end of the term,

you will be asked to answer a short online survey of research-based questions related to instruction. The anonymous results of the survey will be made available to your professors and department chairs for continual improvement of instruction. Look for the survey as part of the Houston Community College Student System online near the end of the term.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change. We may be going more slowly and more quickly through this material than the schedule indicates. To find a more up-to-date and more detailed schedule, got to the "modules" tab on Eagle online Canvas. It is the students responsibility to make sure they find the most up to date reading assignments for each class on Canvas.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 1: Intro and Logic</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 1 (Aug. 22 - Aug. 26)	Introduction to Philosophy  What is Philosophy? Socrates and the Examined Life	Syllabus Ice Breaker & Goals Activity  Plato - Selections from "The Apology" Plato - Selections from "The Republic" These selections will be on powerpoint slides, no need to read them in advance
Week 2 (Aug. 29 - Sept. 2)	Critical Thinking: Reasons and Arguments	Vaughn - "Thinking Philosophically" p. 13-29.
Week 3 (Sept.5 - Sept. 9)	Critical Thinking, Fallacies, and Cognitive Biases  NOTE: No classes Monday, Mon. Sept. 5 is Labor Day	Vaughn - "Philosophical Thinking" pp. 29-36  McRaney - "Confirmation Bias"
<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 2: Ethics</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 4 (Sept. 12 - Sept. 16)	Introduction to Ethics Writing Argument Essays  Cultural Relativism	"APA Handout" "How to Write an Argument Essay"  Rachels - "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 2: Ethics</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 5 (Sept. 26 - Sept. 30)	Critiques of Cultural Relativism Activity  Divine Command Theory	(optional) Midgley - "Trying Out One's New Sword"  Arthur - "Does Morality Depend on God?"  (optional) Craig - "The Indispensability of Theological Meta-Ethical Foundations for Morality"  (optional) Antony - "Good Minus God"
Week 6	Utilitarianism Bentham and Mill Mill's Argument Activity	Jeremy Bentham - "Classical Utilitarianism"  J. S. Mill - "What Utilitarianism Is"  (optional Twilight Zone Episode, details given in class)
Week 7	Deontology/Kant Categorical Imperative Activity  Kant vs. Utilitarianism Trolley Stations Activity	Kant - selections from "Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals"  (optional) Rachels - "Kant and the Categorical Imperative"  (optional) Green, Young, & Sommers - "Trolley Problems"

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 3: Philosophy of Religion</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 8	Arguments for the Existence of God  Cosmological Arguments Aquinas Argument Activity  Design Argument	Aquinas- selection from "Summa Theologica"  Paley- "Natural Theology"

<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 3: Philosophy of Religion</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 9	Hume's critique of Design Arguments  The Problem of Evil	Hume- selection from "Dialogues Concerning Religion"  Wikipedia- "The Problem of Evil"
<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 4: Philosophy of Mind</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 10	Wrap-up Philosophy of Religion  The Mind-Body Problem Substance Dualism	Descartes- selections from "Meditations on First Philosophy" and "A Discourse on Method"
Week 11	Mind-Body Problem Mind-Brain Identity  Functionalism	JJC Smart - "Sensations and Brain Processes"  Elliott Sober - "Functionalism"
<b>Week</b>	<b>Unit 5: Epistemology</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Assignments</b>
Week 12	Introduction to Epistemology  Foundations and Descartes Method of Doubt The Matrix thought experiment	Vaughn: "How to think about weird things"  Descartes-"Meditation I"
Week 13	Descartes Rationalist Theory of Knowledge  Hume's Empiricism	Descartes- "Meditation II & III"  Selections from "Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding"
Week 14	Hume and the Problem of Induction	Selections from "Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding"
Week 15	Catch up and Wrap up Course	