

Phil G100: Introduction to Philosophy - CRN 43807/41644
Golden West College
Instructor: Dr. Jason Sheley
Spring, 2025

HyFlex Modality:
Mon, Wed 9:30-10:55am
LAC 101,
and LIVE ONLINE

Live lectures will be found at: <http://tiny.cc/profsheleyclasses>

E-mail: jsheley@gwc.cccd.edu

Office: LAC 212

Office hours: Mondays, Wednesdays from 1-2pm in-person and by Zoom;
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12-1 by Zoom.

The link for office hours is <http://tiny.cc/jasonsheleyofficehours>,
which can also be found at the top of our Canvas homepage

Course lectures, assignments and handouts can be found on the course Canvas page

This course serves as a general introduction to philosophy. Philosophy is an unusual discipline in that we will often find ourselves asking questions about ordinary things, but from a unique perspective. In this way, we will find that we can reclaim a part of ourselves that we used more frequently when we were children. (In other words, we get to put our natural curiosity back into practice.) At the same time, philosophers are noted for not usually being satisfied with the answers to the questions they ask, and we will look at various methods that philosophers use to answer questions and assess the strength reasons given in support of ideas. We will also consider the extent to which philosophy is a rigorous intellectual activity, and not merely a body of beliefs. In other words, philosophy is at the same time among the most creative and the most critical of disciplines.

In this course, we will examine some common philosophical problems, while also looking at different methods and approaches to doing philosophy. Some questions we will consider include: What reason do I have to obey authority? What is Justice? What is real? What is knowledge? How do we find out whether we can trust our beliefs? Where do values come from? How do we conceive of God? What is the proper way of seeking knowledge? What makes for a good life? What animates human beings? (i.e., what is the soul?) What role does philosophy play in helping us live better? What distinguishes philosophy from other disciplines? Why engage in philosophy at all?

Learning Outcomes: Philosophy is noteworthy as a discipline that helps students improve their ability to think. On the one hand, this ability takes a critical dimension. In particular, students will improve their ability to assess reasons given in favor of or against viewpoints. On the other hand, students will also improve their ability to consider new positions, and to creatively solve problems. Students will also improve their own ability to write clearly and concisely. Finally, students will gain an appreciation for the enjoyment of thinking rigorously.

In addition, students will gain the following skills:

1. Learn and explain basic problems of Western Philosophy and philosophical positions of classical philosophers.
2. Demonstrate close and accurate reading of classical philosophical texts.
3. Discover underlying structure of classical texts.
4. Analyze and appraise philosophical arguments.
5. Compare and contrast alternative approaches to basic philosophical questions.
6. Critically evaluate alternative philosophies.

Students will also gain critical thinking skills and be able to:

1. Analyze the structure of philosophical writing
2. Analyze philosophical arguments; identify premises and conclusions
3. Evaluate philosophical arguments
4. Apply philosophical positions to cases
5. Identify consequences and implications of philosophical positions
6. Compare and contrast philosophical positions

Texts:

This course uses **Zero Cost Textbooks (ZTC)**. There is no need to buy any books for the course. Please consult the instructor before you buy any books or print anything for our class.

Required:

Plato, *Apology*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1656>

Plato, *Crito*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1657>

Plato, *Republic*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1497>

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

<http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/>

David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/9662>

Strongly Recommended:

The Elements of Style, by Strunk and White

<http://www.bartleby.com/141/>

Class Policies:

HyFlex Classes:

You are part of a new pilot program we are initiating here at Golden West College! HyFlex class sessions are conducted in a traditional classroom or lecture hall and are simultaneously available online. Students can register for the in-class or the synchronous streaming section of the class. Students registered for the in-class session have the option to attend the class online as needed. Students registered for the online section also have the option of attending in-person as needed.

Expectations for a HyFlex Course:

- The instructor will be in the classroom.
- Some students will attend in the classroom. Some students will attend online. To help create an inclusive classroom environment, the online students may be projected onto a screen in the classroom.
- All class activities are offered both in-person and online.
- Lectures may be recorded for later asynchronous viewing.
- Both students in the room and students online will take online quizzes, discussions, essays, and exams.

Student Responsibilities

- All students must read the entire Syllabus and adhere to all course policies and expectations
- Students attending online must have access to computers with web cameras and microphones, and they must have access to reliable broadband.
- All students must attend and actively participate in the class as scheduled, and keep current with all course assignments, quizzes, and examinations.

- If a student is not able to attend class in either modality, then the attendance can be made up by viewing the relevant missed material, and visiting the instructor's Student Office Hours (or making an appointment outside of the listed hours).

Recording and Privacy

- By enrolling in this class, you are giving permission for software/cameras to be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review the content that was presented.
- These recordings will be made available only to students who are currently enrolled in the class, and only during the period in which the course is offered. All recordings will become unavailable to students in this class shortly after the class ends.
- The recordings of our Zoom sessions will be provided in a course Announcement every week.
- By District policy, classes may not be recorded without the instructor's permission. Likewise, recordings, images, and pictures from the course may not be shared on social media without the instructor's permission.

Communication Policies:

Announcements: Every week, you will receive announcements from me about the content of the course. In these announcements, I will mention due dates and things to do, but also give reminders and tips about the course content itself. Students should make sure to update their notification settings in Canvas.

Announcements are probably the quickest way to get ahold of me. Just reply to the Announcement thread that I've made and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours during normal college business hours.

Office Hours: Office hours are the other best way to find me. Office hours are time that I set aside just for students. You are all welcome to attend! Every week, I hold office hours Mondays and Wednesdays, 1pm-2pm; and Tuesdays and Thursdays 12pm-1pm. All office hours are on zoom. However, Mondays and Wednesdays you can also find me in my office in LAC 212.

Email: Email is another good way to get ahold of me. I do my best to respond to emails within 48 hours, during regular college business hours, Monday through Friday

8am-5pm. For questions that are about things that other students would like to know, I may respond to your email by posting an Announcement to the class.

Grading: For discussions, I try my best to let everyone have a chance to post and respond to other students before I grade everything. This means that I will do my best to grade discussions the week after they are due.

For midterms and essays, I will do my best to grade everything within 10 days of the due date. The exception to this is if an extension to the due date is granted, in which case my goal is to grade everything within 10 days of the extension date.

Discussions: For all discussions you will need to do two original posts and two posts responding to other students, unless otherwise indicated. I will do my best to respond within the thread during the week. However, I usually prefer to make Announcements about trends that I'm seeing in the discussions, especially where it will help clear up some points that are difficult to understand.

AI Policy

This class may incorporate AI (ChatGPT, for example) into some of the lessons. Beware of the limits of AI, as well as proper ways to use it:

- AI is a tool that can help you improve your work, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment where you used AI, explaining what you used the AI for and what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is in violation of Academic Honesty policies.
- **Remember that I am legally obligated to make sure that you are the person taking this class, and also for verifying that you have learned everything successfully. If I find that you are turning in AI produced work, I will issue a provisional score of 0 and ask you to attend office hours to clear the zero. In other words, your discussion or essay will turn into a short oral exam to verify that you have learned the material.**
- Be thoughtful about when this tool is useful. Don't use it if it isn't appropriate for the case or circumstance. The work you submit, overall, **must be your own, unique work.**
- If you provide minimum effort prompts, you will get low quality results. You will need to refine your prompts in order to get good results. This will take work and careful thinking. This means that any class you are taking that trains you how to think is now extremely important for your overall education.
- Don't trust anything it says. If it gives you a number or a fact, assume it is wrong unless you either know the answer or can check in another source.
- **You are solely responsible for the uses that you put AI to, including any errors or problems it contains. You are also solely responsible if you use AI in ways that prevent you from learning anything in this class.**

Some representative examples of what you can and cannot use AI for in this course include but are not limited to the following:

- You **CAN** use AI to
 - give suggestions on how to fix your grammar or make your writing sound better;
 - help you organize your work and give you suggestions on how to answer a question;
 - help you create an outline or summary of your work;
 - help you do research; or
 - help you figure out where to expand on your ideas or where your argument is weak.
- You **CANNOT**
 - submit assignments that are primarily written by AI;
 - submit AI generated summaries or outlines as your own; or
 - fail to properly cite where and how you used AI.

COVID-19 Information:

The information and policies below are subject to change. For the latest information on COVID-19 from the Coast Community College District, please check <https://cccd.edu/aboutus/novelcoronavirus/index.cfm>

COVID-19 reporting and safety:

If you have new and unexplained fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, other breathing difficulties, fatigue, stomach illness, loss of smell or taste, or other feelings of being unwell, you should notify the Health Center or inform a trusted individual who will notify the Health Center and President's Office.

Students that have been exposed to COVID-19 on campus will be notified by the school. In the event you are knowingly exposed to the virus at any point or have symptoms indicative of the virus, you are encouraged to get a test and can check with the school's health center for how to obtain a free COVID-19 test (<https://www.goldenwestcollege.edu/student-health-center/covid/index.html>). If you are exposed to the virus and vaccinated but are asymptomatic, you are allowed to remain on campus. If you are not vaccinated and knowingly exposed to the virus, have symptoms (regardless of vaccination status), or test positive for COVID-19, then you should remain off-campus until:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, your first positive test, or your last known exposure, AND
- At least 24 hours have passed with no fever (<100.4°F without use of fever-reducing medications), AND
- Other symptoms have improved or remain absent.

Class absence, cancelation, or change of instruction due to COVID-related reasons:

In the event you must miss class or an assignment deadline due to COVID-related reasons, inform the instructor (me) as soon as you can. I will make every effort to

accommodate any missed assignments, so long as I am notified within a reasonable amount of time. In normal circumstances, any missed class can be made up by viewing the videos and lecture online, then participating in the discussion board. In the event class gets canceled, students should view the videos associated with each lesson, and participate in the discussion board for that week.

Assignments

Requirements:

Midterm	200 Points	20%
Final	200 Points	20%
Paper #1 (or research journal)	200 Points	20%
Paper #2	200 Points	20%
Discussion boards and participation	200 Points	20%

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAM: The midterm and final exam will be taken in Canvas. Topics and questions are based on the the in-class quiz sets, lecture notes, and study guide. The study guide will be made available at least two weeks prior to the exam. The questions will be a combination of short answer, multiple choice, and a choice of essay questions.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: The purpose of these essays is to give each student the opportunity to apply what you have learned to new cases in creative ways. The topics for the essays can be found in Canvas. The essays will address issues covered in the course readings and class lectures. You should not need to engage in any outside reading or research for the exams. These essays must be typed or word-processed, and an electronic copy must be submitted to Canvas by the due date set in class. The instructor also reserves the right to review student assignments using Turnitin.com. The standards by which the written assignments are evaluated are appended at the end of this syllabus.

RESEARCH JOURNAL OPTION: Students have the option of engaging in a research journal as a replacement for one of the writing assignments. This would entail keeping a journal in which you keep track of daily research activities related to the main topic of the course. Daily entries would involve anywhere from 5 to 30 minutes of work. These entries could include (but are not limited to): reading an article or primary source, doing the reading for class, reviewing notes and previous lectures, finding news stories, watching part of a documentary, doing several minutes of free-writing or directed writing. In order to get credit for this portion, students must inform the instructor of their intentions no later than the second week, and must fulfill at least 75% of possible

research days (75 days). The student would then fill out a questionnaire, explaining their results, along with photographic evidence that the journal exists.

GRADING SCALE:

A=100-89%

B=88-79%

C=78-69%

D=69-60%

F=<59%

HOLISTIC GRADING: The overall grade in the course is determined by averaging the scores of the five assignments. For example, grades of C, C, B, B, B+ on five assignments would result in a final overall grade of B. Missing one assignment (for example) is sufficient to lower the overall maximum possible grade to 80, or a B-.

GRADE DISPUTES: The only acceptable reasons to alter a grade on an assignment are an error in judgment on the instructor's part, or else a calculation error. It should be noted that errors work both ways: sometimes the instructor misses something that would have in fact resulted in a lower grade. If a re-examination of grading is requested, the possible result is that the grade will be raised, lowered, or stay the same. The only acceptable reason to reassess the student's total grade for the course is a calculation or bookkeeping error. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their progress in the course. Grade disputes on individual assignments must be expressed in writing within 10 days of an assignment being returned to students.

CONTACTING ME: I encourage you to contact me to discuss your questions about the readings and assignments. **I will be available on campus during my office hours. Also, feel free to e-mail me with any questions you have about the course.** I can help you avoid problems and find new ways of thinking about the issues we will cover in the course assignments. It is worth your while to discuss your ideas for your assignments with me, however I do not read sample essays prior to their due dates. I will gladly discuss drafts of your essays in office hours, though.

Students with Disabilities: Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities at Golden West College. If you have, or think you might have, a disability that impacts your educational experience in this class, please contact DSPS to determine your eligibility for accommodations. DSPS is located in the Student Services Annex, Building 22. Their phone number is [\(714\) 895-8721](tel:7148958721). If you are already registered with DSPS, please submit your accommodation requests as soon as possible to allow adequate time to provide accommodation. I Email dsp@gwc.cccd.edu | Website: www.goldenwestcollege.edu/dsp

Emergencies: You should be familiar with the campus emergency and safety information: <http://www.goldenwestcollege.edu/publicsafety/> and <http://www.goldenwestcollege.edu/shakeout/index.html> .

For on-campus emergencies, call [714-895-8999](tel:714-895-8999) (x58999 from a campus phone)

Student Well-being: GWC is committed to supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all of our students. If you or another student you know needs support, please do not hesitate to use the following resources:

- Physical and Mental Health Services: Current GWC students may receive free or very low-cost physical and mental health care at the Student Health Center, which is located in the Nursing and Health Services building. Please check the Student Health Center website, <http://www.goldenwestcollege.edu/student-health-center> , or call for an appointment or more information: [714-895-8379](tel:714-895-8379).
- Food Security: GWC also makes an effort to provide food, toiletries, and other necessities for current GWC students who are in need. Check the GWC Student Equity website, www.goldenwestcollege.edu/student-equity , for on-campus food pantry locations and hours of operation. For additional information, please contact Jill Kiefer, Administrative Assistant to the Vice President of Student Services, at [714-892-7711](tel:714-892-7711) ext. 55305 or in her office in the Answer Center.

Academic Honesty: You are required to be familiar with the rules for academic honesty for the College. You can find these at: <http://www.goldenwestcollege.edu/admissions/honesty.html> . This includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. Any violations will be handled as specified by College protocol (which can be rather harsh). In short: don't do it. Assume that ANY academic honesty violation will be met with an F in the course and proper reporting on your record, though punishment is mostly at my discretion. ***Talk to me about problems with your work before you cheat – seriously, we can work something out if you're going to resort to it.***

Intoxication: Student success is our top priority. It is unacceptable to be intoxicated or under the influence during class, and it certainly will not contribute to your academic success. Since it is illegal, by California state law and District policy to have alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs on campus and it is prohibited to drive while under the influence, there is no acceptable excuse for on-campus intoxication. In order to maintain a classroom climate that fosters student success, anyone suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be asked to leave class immediately. Signs may include slurred speech, sleeping in class, odor of alcohol or marijuana, red or glassy eyes, stumbling.

My Role as a Responsible Employee: Because your health and safety are paramount to every member of the Golden West College family, the College has a policy that all Responsible Employees – your professors included – are required to file a formal report if we hear of any occurrences of gender-based (or sex-based)

discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, retaliation, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. If you disclose information relating to any of the aforementioned occurrences to me, or to any other employee on this campus (with the exception of licensed therapists in the GWC Student Health Center), we are obligated to report your name, the name of the alleged perpetrator/s, and any other relevant information you provide.

The College absolutely encourages you to make a formal report to the Title IX coordinator, but we also respect survivors' and victims' rights to choose how to report their experiences. Knowing that I am required to report the incident, you may feel more comfortable contacting one of the licensed therapists in the GWC Student Health Center. They are trained to help survivors and victims of assault and are not required to report the incident to authorities.

You will find many links to sexual assault hotlines, resources, and awareness organizations in our class Canvas shell. You can find additional information regarding confidential and non-confidential reporting options and on- and off-campus resources in the Crisis Resources Live Binder. To make a non-confidential report, you may also contact the College's Title IX Coordinator/Dean of Students, Carla Martinez, at cmartinez@gwc.cccd.edu or [\(714\) 895-8781](tel:7148958781).

This syllabus can be changed at any time as is seen fit by the instructor.

LATE WORK: Generally, you should assume that I will not accept late work without prior arrangements or serious mitigating circumstances. If there is a conflict with the due-date for any assignment, you should make arrangements with the instructor well prior to its due date. Computer errors (including disk errors, printer, or e-mail problems) may not be acceptable excuses for failing to turn your work in on time. You should have your work done early enough, and be conscientious enough about backing up your work to forgo such problems. For problems that arise too close to the due date for us to make alternate arrangements, leaving the instructor a message concerning the problem does not obligate me to accept your late work. At my discretion I will determine whether or not to accept the assignment, and what penalties, if any, are appropriate according to the merits of the case at hand. Failure to submit either of the two essays or to take the final exam may result in a grade of "F" for that assignment.

ATTENDANCE: Class discussion during lectures and in discussion sections will play a critical role in your understanding of the issues we will cover in this class. As such, I expect everyone to attend all lectures and all discussion sections. In other words, **attendance of lectures is mandatory.** If you miss an excessive amount of class lectures or discussion section sessions, the instructor may decide not to accept any more of your work for the course. If students have not appeared in class before the campus census date, the instructor reserves the right to drop the student from the course.

WRITING: All of your work should be well written with proper spelling, grammar, and sentence construction. Poor writing is unclear and thus seriously reduces the

quality of your work. For those who require assistance with their writing, Fullerton College offers a variety of resources to offer you some assistance. Feel free to see me if you wish to be directed towards these resources. In addition, I strongly recommend that you purchase a copy of Strunk and White's book, *The Elements of Style*.

CLASS BEHAVIOR: I ask that all members of the class conduct themselves in a respectful manner. Respect for others takes a number of forms in this class, and in academic life generally. In the first place, it means that we need to be sensitive to how our behavior in class affects others. In particular, we need to recognize that since we are dealing with controversial issues, some members of the class may have had something like this happen to them. At the very least, it is safe to assume that this is the case, and act accordingly.

I ask that you take conversations and phone calls outside, please. I also ask that you not text, chat online, or surf the net in class. If your behavior becomes problematic or disruptive, I will ask you to leave.

Lastly, in addition to the commonsensical considerations listed above, I ask that you have intellectual respect for others, as well. This means that if you disagree with a position that someone holds, you should assume that the person is at least as smart as you are, and that the person probably has good reasons for thinking as he or she does. Your job is to be a good listener and exchange ideas, not to attack and degrade others. In other words, the type of inquiry we are engaged in is not the same thing as MMA or Boxing; we are all engaged in a cooperative effort to reach the truth, not to "defeat an opponent" (whatever that means).

Schedule:

***** Note: Schedule subject to change, according to time permitted *****

Wk 1	What is philosophy? What is philosophy good for?	
Topics	Childish Questions Using reason Puzzle: Goals, aims, happiness Puzzle: The Ship of Theseus Socrates' exhortation to philosophy	
Readings		

Wk 2		
Topics	The philosopher and the state - to what extent should I obey authority? What does it mean to do the right thing?	
Readings	Plato, <i>Crito</i>	

Wk 3		
Topics	What is Justice? What relationship is there between being Just and living a good life? Puzzle: The Prisoner's Dilemma	
Readings	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 1	

Wk 4		
Topics	Why not be completely unjust? Glaucon's challenge The Ring of Gyges	Writing: Essay #1 Assigned
Readings	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 2	

Wk 5		
Topics	How to design a Theory of Justice What do we want a theory of Justice to do? Consequentialism Deontology	
Readings		

Wk 6		
Topics	How to design a Theory of Justice The City and the Soul How is the Just person better off?	
Readings	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 3 and 4	

Wk 7		
Topics	Reality and Values The Euthyphro Dilemma	
Readings	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>	

Wk 8		Midterm Review
Topics	Where do our beliefs come from? How do we distinguish good beliefs from bad ones?	MIDTERM - DATE, TIME, AND FORMAT TBA
Readings	Descartes, <i>Meditation 1</i>	

Wk 9		
Topics	Should we privilege knowledge from the senses, or reason? (or both?)	
Readings	Descartes, <i>Meditation 2</i>	

Wk 10		
Topics	Does God exist? How would we attempt to prove it?	
Readings	Descartes, <i>Meditation 3</i>	

Wk 11		
Topics	What is knowledge? How do we know what is true? How do we distinguish what is true from what is false?	
Readings	Descartes, <i>Meditation 4</i> , <i>Meditation 6</i>	

Wk 12		
Topics	David Hume's Response to Descartes Empiricism	Essay #1 Due
Readings	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , sections 2-5	

Wk 13		
Topics	How do we make difficult life choices? Transformative Experiences	
Readings	Ruth Chang, "Making Hard Choices" (youtube) L.A. Paul, "Precis of Transformative Experience" L.A. Paul, "What You Can't Expect When You're Expecting"	

Wk 14		
Topics	How do we make difficult life choices? Particular Experiences	
Readings	L.A. Paul, (cont.) Epictetus, <i>Enchiridion</i> Selections from Friedrich Nietzsche	

Wk 15		
Topics	The Philosophy of Games and Gaming Back where we started: the value of Philosophy Clean-up and review	Writing: Essay #2 due
Readings	TBA	

Wk 16	FINAL EXAM On Canvas	
	Final Exam Review in Zoom. Time and date TBD	