

Bergen Community College
Division of Humanities
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Course Master Syllabus

PHR 101 Introduction to Philosophy

Basic Information About Course and Instructor

Semester and year:

Section Number:

Meeting Times:

Locations:

Instructor Name:

Office Location:

Phone:

Office Hours:

Email Address:

Departmental Secretary: Shailly Mahajan, A-328A, 201-879-3606

Course Description

PHR-101 Introduction to Philosophy is a study of the basic problems and methods of philosophical inquiry, concentrating on the work of such major thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Sartre. Topics of discussion include the nature of philosophy; the nature and limits of human knowledge; the nature and existence of God; the scope and limits of human freedom; the differences between right and wrong conduct; the nature of the good life; and the meaning and value of human existence.

Credits: 3 (3 lectures)

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: None

General Education Humanities Course

Student Learning Outcomes

As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to:

Student Learning Outcome:	Means of Assessment:
1. Read, interpret, summarize and paraphrase philosophical texts on the nature of reality, knowledge, and the good.	Examinations or Quizzes Critical Summary Essay Argument Analysis Essay Argument Regimentation/Reconstruction Projects
2. Compare, contrast and evaluate different historical and contemporary philosophical thinkers on specific philosophical issues.	Examinations Quizzes Compare and Contrast Essays Case Analysis Projects
3. Research, evaluate, and effectively organize information on philosophical issues, positions and arguments.	Research essay utilizing the philosopher's index or other scholarly search engines and peer vetted or peer reviewed sources
4. Reflect on, and write about, their own values and beliefs as they relate to philosophical texts and arguments.	Reflection Essays Philosophy in the Wild Project
5. Explain the weakness in, and the objections to, their own positions on philosophical issues, and recognize the strengths of competing positions.	In-Class Debate Guided In-Class Discussions Argument Analysis Essays
6. Listen to others on controversial philosophical issues and participate actively and constructively in discussion of these issues.	In-Class Debate Guided In-Class Discussions

Essential Learning Outcomes

	EL1	EL 2	EL 3	EL 4	EL 5	EL 6	EL 7	EL 8	EL 9	EL10	EL 11
SLO 1		X						X	X		
SLO 2		X						X	X		
SLO 3		X				X					
SLO 4		X							X		
SLO 5	X	X									
SLO 6	X										X

EL1-Effective Speaking
 EL2-Effective Writing
 EL3-Mathematical Reasoning
 EL4-Scientific Reasoning
 EL5-Technological Competency
 EL6-Information Literacy

EL7-Social-Behavioral Analysis
 EL8-Historical Analysis
 EL9-Humanistic Analysis
 EL10-Intercultural Awareness
 EL11-Moral Literacy

*In accordance with the *Standards for General Education Courses at Bergen Community College (2013)*, all Gen Ed courses are required to address EL1, EL2, EL6, and EL11 (when appropriate), in addition to the ELO that corresponds to its area of study (EL 3-5 and 7-9).

Signature Assignment:

The following assignment should be taught at least once in all sections.

Critical Summary Essay

The critical summary is a substantial and focused 3-page essay, written in MLA style, about a specific philosophical argument in an assigned reading. The first two parts of this project are *analysis* and the third part is *evaluation*:

1. **Identify and “unpack” some specific supported claim made in the text—this is the conclusion of some argument in the reading.** Students should briefly explain its meaning through key terms or useful background information, and its importance by how it relates to the rest of the text, or this course, or the philosophical subject matter generally. They must correctly quote and cite the text, but quotations should not be more than 20% of the text.
2. **Explain the support for the conclusion—the premises of the argument.** These could be examples or analogies, common knowledge or special assumptions, definitions, rules of science or logic, even ethical principles or moral theories—anything the author relies on in supporting their claim. (Usually, the author is explicit about this, but sometimes arguments contain important unstated assumptions). Quotes are required in this part of the essay; however, quotes should not be more than 20% of the text, you do have to write on your own here.
3. **Evaluate the argument.** Students should explain why we ought to accept or reject the argument. Students might explain why this is a good philosophical argument, why any reader ought to be convinced by it. They might also defend the argument against a potential objection. If the student thinks we should reject it, they need to explain what’s wrong with the argument (which *cannot* be that you just disagree with the conclusion); i.e., they need to explain why *any reader* ought to reject the argument. Quotes are not required here. This is where the student’s ideas belong.

Course Content:

The course is intended to introduce students to some important thinkers from the history of philosophy and to the basic problems and methods of philosophy. Therefore, the course includes the following mandatory components:

1. An at least minimal review of philosophy’s major periods, e.g., ancient, medieval, modern, contemporary, etc.
2. An at least minimal review of the location of philosophical figures, e.g., Chinese, Greek, European, etc.
3. Considerable review of the topics, problems and methods of philosophy.

Students are required to work on the texts of at least one philosopher from each of the following two groups:

1. Ancient Greek or Roman philosophy.
2. Modern European philosophy.

Furthermore, not more than one major work in ethics (e.g., the Nicomachean Ethics) should be included in PHR 101 Introduction to Philosophy, since the course should not overlap substantially with PHR 110 Introduction to Ethics or PHR 102 Contemporary Moral Issues. Issues in general normative ethics and metaethics are considered in depth in PHR-110; and major contemporary controversies in applied ethics are covered in PHR-102. The primary emphasis in PHR-101 should be on issues in metaphysics and epistemology. Inclusion of issues and/or works in aesthetics and social and political philosophy is also permissible, but discussions of value theory should comprise no more than 20% of the course. PHR 101 Introduction to Philosophy may contain philosophers from any part of the world, but should not overly-emphasize Asian philosophy, as that would overlap too much with PHR 106 Asian

Philosophy.

In addition to the foregoing mandatory components, the course may include the study of contemporary writings on major philosophical problems. The course may be presented as either an historically-ordered or topically-ordered study of the writings of major philosophers, or as a study of the ways in which ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophers have approached the major problems of philosophy.

Course Texts or Other Study Materials:

Students in PHR 101 Introduction to Philosophy must read mostly primary texts, not textbooks that describe philosophical positions (though such can be used in addition to primary texts). There are many excellent textbook anthologies of primary readings. Instructors may also choose Open Educational Resources (OER) for their courses, to keep student costs minimal. However, instructors should be selective about OER readings, which can sometimes contain dated or inferior translations or excerpts. The following textbooks come recommended by the department of philosophy and religion:

- Gideon Rosen, et al., editors. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*. W.W. Norton, 2018.
- Steven M. Cahn editor. *Exploring Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 8th edition 2023.
- George Cronk, Toby De Marco, Peter Dlugos, and Paul Eckstein, editors. *Readings in Philosophy: Eastern & Western Sources*. Plymouth, MI: Hayden-McNeil Publishing, Inc., 2nd edition, 2004
- Andrew Bailey, editor. *The Broadview Introduction to Philosophy*. Broadview Press, 2019.

Research, Writing, and/or Examination Requirement(s):

As a 'General Education Humanities' course, PHR 101 requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking, writing and speaking assignments. It also may require students to employ techniques of scholarly research in some assignments, which may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to, or comment on, student writing in detail.

Grading Policy:

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend on time every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance, lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the

individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes. A reasonable makeup policy is left to the instructor's discretion, but good excuses, serious and documented, should be accepted. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Statement on the BCC Philosophy Club:

The Philosophy Club has functioned continuously since the late 1980's. It usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. Students are encouraged to join the club. For further information, contact the Office of Student Life, who can provide contacts for the current club executive board and faculty advisor.

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements:

Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty:

[Academic Matters - Bergen Community College - Acalog ACMST™](#)

Statement on the appropriate use of AI (see the following link for guidance):

[AI-Guidance-Resource-Page.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

ADA statement:

[Disability Services \(Office of Specialized Services\) | Bergen Community College](#)

Sexual Harassment statement:

[HR-003-001.2018-Policy-Prohibiting-Sexual-Harassment.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology:

[Acceptable-Use-Policy.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

Recommended Syllabus Statements from the Office of Specialized Services:

[Syllabus Statements | Bergen Community College](#)

Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.

Accessibility Statement

Bergen Community College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College's programs or services, contact the Office of Special Services (OSS) as soon as possible at 201-612-5270 or www.bergen.edu/oss. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with OSS. The OSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. The OSS serves as a clearinghouse on disability issues and works in partnership with faculty and all other student service offices.

Student Support Services

Bergen Community College provides exemplary support to its students and offers a broad variety of opportunities and services. A comprehensive array of student support services including advising, tutoring, academic coaching, and more are available online at <https://bergen.edu/currentstudents/>.



Sidney Silverman Library Online Resources:

[Guides BY SUBJECT - LibGuides at Bergen Community College](#)

General Search and Databases: [Library | Bergen Community College](#)

Sample Course Schedule:

This version of PHR 101 is topical and organized into distinct learning modules. The structure of modules is an opening discussion with a reflective in-class essay, followed by readings in philosophy, an in-class debate and then an exam, considered summative for the module. The final module is the critical summary project.

Week	Topic/Activity/Assignments
1-4	<p>Module 1: Defining Knowledge</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <p>Plato “The Myth of the Cave” from <i>Republic VII</i> Plato <i>Meno</i> Gettier “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” Timothy Williamson “Knowledge and Belief”</p> <p><u>Assessments:</u></p> <p>In-class reflective writing: Does Knowledge Require Justification? Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 1, multiple choice and short essays</p>
5-9	<p>Module 2: The Philosophy of Mind</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <p>Descartes “Meditation I” from <i>The Meditations</i> Descartes “Meditations II and VI” from <i>The Meditations</i> Elisabeth of Bohemia “Letter to Descartes” Antoine Arnauld from “Letters and Correspondences to R. Descartes” Gilbert Ryle “Descartes’ Myth” from <i>The Concept of Mind</i> JJC Smart “Sensations and Brain Processes” John Searle “Can Computers think?”</p> <p><u>Assessments:</u></p> <p>In-class reflective writing: Am I mind with a body or a body with a mind? Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 2, multiple choice and short essays</p>
10-14	<p>Module 3: Free Will</p> <p><u>Required Reading:</u></p> <p>Galen Strawson “Free Will” Roderick Chisholm “Human Freedom and the Self” Harry Frankfurt “Freedom of the Will and the COnccept of a Person” Susan Wolf “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility”</p> <p><u>Assessments:</u></p>

	<p>In-class reflective writing: Does Knowledge Require Justification? Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 3, multiple choice and short essays</p>
15	<p>Module 4: Critical Summary <u>Required Reading:</u> None, students should pick a text to work on, providing this to instructors. Peer review in class <u>Assessments:</u> Critical Summary Project (out of class writing)</p>

*All readings are from Rosen, *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*

Note to Students: This course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.