

Bergen Community College  
Division of Arts & Humanities  
Department of Philosophy & Religion

**Course Syllabus**

**PHR-104 Topics in Philosophy**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year:  
Course and Section Number:  
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:  
Office Location:  
Phone:  
Departmental Secretary: [optional]  
Office Hours:  
Email Address:

**Course Description**

**PHR-104 Topics in Philosophy** is an introductory study of major themes in both traditional and modern philosophical literature, concentrating on such topics as the human condition; the scope and limits of human freedom; the human experience of death; the nature of truth, beauty, and goodness; the relationship between liberty, equality, and justice; and the human search for the meaning of life. [Here, the instructor may/should insert a statement on the theme(s) to be explored during a particular semester. For example, "This semester, our major theme will be 'philosophical anthropology,' i.e., philosophical theories of human existence. We will study and discuss Freudian, Marxist, Existentialist, and Christian perspectives on human nature and the human condition."]

3 lectures, 3 credits

General Education Course – Humanities Elective

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

1. identify the major periods and the major figures in the history of philosophy;
2. identify and analyze the basic problems of philosophy in the fields of metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology;
3. interpret, summarize, and paraphrase, both orally and in writing, the views of philosophers as expressed in philosophical texts;
4. use the logical and critical thinking methods of philosophy to analyze and evaluate the ways in which philosophers attempt to solve the problems of philosophy; and
5. state and support their own views on philosophical issues logically, coherently, concisely, and clearly, both orally and in writing.

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of primary source materials on philosophical themes and problems; the basic principles and methods of logical reasoning are introduced; the techniques of philosophical research and writing are reviewed; students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. These alignments and correlations are depicted in the [attached document](#). [[Back to course listing](#)]

See an [individual classroom syllabus](#) for this course based on the policies stated in this departmental syllabus. [[Back to course listing](#)]

### Course Content

This course is designed to be flexible as to content and method of presentation, and its focus varies from semester to semester, and from instructor to instructor. Regardless of format, however, the course will introduce students to the (at least general) history of philosophy and to the basic problems and methods of philosophy. Themes such as the following will provide a suitable basis for the course:

1. Contemporary Philosophy
2. Comparative Philosophy (e.g., Western and Non-Western Philosophical Traditions)
3. Social and Political Philosophy
4. History of Philosophy
5. Major Theories of Human Nature and the Human Condition ("Philosophical Anthropology")
6. Philosophical Issues in Literature (and/or Cinema)
7. The Basic Problems of Philosophy
8. Philosophy of Religion
9. Philosophy of Science (including the Social Sciences)
10. Philosophy of Art (Aesthetics)
11. Philosophy of History
12. Philosophy of Law
13. Metaphysics
14. Theory of Knowledge
15. Philosophy in Film and Literature

### Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy and/or information literacy learning in the course; etc.

### Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Choice of texts and/or other study materials will be made by the individual instructor and will depend on the topic(s) or theme(s) selected for the course.

### **Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

Because PHR-110 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments 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 and comment on students' writing in detail.

### **Grading Policy**

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon 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 fifteen percent (15%) of the final grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **BCC Attendance Policy:**

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and 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.

#### **Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. 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.

#### **Attendance Policy in this Course:**

[To be designated by the instructor]

**Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements** [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u> Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty. ADA statement. Sexual Harassment statement. Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology. Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
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**Student and Faculty Support Services** [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

**Student and Faculty Support Services**

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 <a href="mailto:psimms@bergen.edu">psimms@bergen.edu</a>
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp">www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp</a>
The Tutoring Center	Room S-118	201-447-7908
The Technology Assisted Learning Lab (Math and English)	Room C-110	201-447-7988
The Writing Center	Room C-110	201-447-7136
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)		<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/owl">www.bergen.edu/owl</a>
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-153	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

**Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club**

**Logos - The BCC Philosophy Club**

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, in Room L-342. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the philosophy club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Dr. Vanda Bozicevic (L-331, 201-493-7528, [vbozicevic@bergen.edu](mailto:vbozicevic@bergen.edu)). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

**Include a Course Outline and Calendar** [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")

- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

**Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar**

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

**SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF KEY DATES AND EVENTS**

**Topic for this Semester: What is Reality?**

**INTRODUCTION**

**The Nature Of Philosophy**

**Reading 1:** Cronk, "Notes on the Nature of Philosophy" (item 2.1 under the "Course Content" icon – and will be distributed in class)

**Supplementary Readings on the Nature of Philosophy** (item 2.1 under the "Course Content" icon)

**Issues in Metaphysics and Epistemology**

**Suggested Supplementary Readings on Metaphysics and Epistemology:** TBA.

**PLATO ON KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY**

**Reading 2:** Plato, from *The Republic*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 107-123

**PHILOSOPHY AND LOGIC: THE PROCESS OF CORRECT REASONING**

**Reading 3:** Cronk, "Philosophy and Logic" (item 5.1 under the "Course Content" icon – and will be distributed in class)

**Supplementary Readings on Logic** (item 5.1 under the "Course Content" icon)

**RENÉ DESCARTES ON KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY**

**Reading 4:** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 283-306

**Supplementary Readings:** Gilbert Ryle, from *The Concept of Mind*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 469-480

Anselm of Canterbury, from the *Proslogion*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 263-264

Thomas Aquinas, from the *Summa Theologica*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 265-268

**DAVID HUME ON KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY**

**Reading 5:** Hume, from *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 327-340

**IMMANUEL KANT ON KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY**

**Reading 6:** Kant, from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Readings in Philosophy*, 341-363

**Supplementary Reading:** William James, "The Will to Believe," in *Readings in Philosophy*, 425-434

**JOHN SEARLE ON THE IDEA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

**Reading 7:** Searle, "Can Computers Think?," in *Readings in Philosophy*, 515-520

**Key Dates and Events**

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

<b>Dates, Topics, Activities, Events</b>	<b>Student Learning Objectives</b>
<b>Introduction: The Nature of Philosophy</b>	
Sept 5 & 12a Read "Notes on the Nature of Philosophy"	1, 2
" Class lecture and discussion	1, 2
<b>Introduction: Issues in Metaphysics and Epistemology</b>	
Sept 12b & 19 Class lecture and discussion	2, 4, 5
<b>Plato on Knowledge and Reality</b>	
Sept 26 & Read Plato	2, 3, 4
Oct. 3 Class lecture and discussion	1-5
Oct 3 Deadline for completing Student Information & Syllabus Comprehension Surveys	
<b>Dates, Topics, Activities, Events</b>	<b>Student Learning Objectives</b>
<b>Philosophy and Logic: The Process of Correct Reasoning</b>	
Oct 10 & 17 Read "Philosophy & Logic" article	4, 5
" Class lecture and discussion	2, 3, 4
Oct 10 Argument Analysis Paper assigned (due 11/7)	3, 4, 5
<b>Mid-Term Examination up &amp; running – October 22 through October 28</b>	
	1-5

<b>René Descartes on Knowledge and Reality</b>		
Oct 24 & 31	Read Descartes	2, 3, 4
"	Class lecture and discussion	1-5
<b>David Hume on Knowledge and Reality</b>		
Nov 7 & 14	Read Hume	2, 3, 4
"	Class lecture and discussion	1-5
<b>Nov 7</b>	<b>Argument Analysis Paper due by 11:35 AM</b>	3, 4, 5
<b>Immanuel Kant on Knowledge and Reality</b>		
Nov 21 &	Read Kant	2, 3, 4
Dec 5	Class lecture and discussion	1-5
<b>Dec 5</b>	<b>Final deadline for late and extra credit work – no late or extra credit work accepted after this date</b>	
<b>John Searle on Artificial Intelligence: "Can Computers Think?"</b>		
Dec 12	Read Searle	2, 3, 4
"	Class lecture and discussion	2-5
Dec 19	Continued class discussion on Searle (if necessary)	"
"	<b>Final review of course</b>	1, 2
<b>End-Term Examination up &amp; running – December 13 through December 19</b>		1-5