

PHIL101 Introduction to Philosophy¹

Section 001 (CRN30338, 3 credit hours)

Summer, 2013 (C-term: June 3-July 3)

Winthrop University

Meeting: online

Prof. M. Gregory Oakes, Ph.D.

Office: Kinard 323

Office Hours: by appointment (just ask)

telephone: 206/715-0458 (cell – reliable, 9am-9pm); 803/323-4720 (office - unreliable)

email: oakesm@winthrop.edu

website: <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/oakesm>

Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy. Philosophy is basic to human thought and life, and this course will show the student some of the important respects in which this is so. The student will learn and employ philosophical principles to gain insight into the nature of the human self, our knowledge of truth and reality, moral judgment, and human action. The successful student will learn the benefit of applying philosophical principles in his or her life.

This course will make significant demands of your capacity for abstract thought and argumentation. Mastery of this course will enable you to write, talk, and think more critically and to live a more engaged, aware life.

Course General Education Goals

Department Program Goal: To prepare students for a fulfilling life by equipping them with the impetus, skills, and knowledge to ask the most fundamental questions of human existence.²

In addition, this course is intended to satisfy the following Touchstone education goals.

- Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems. We address this competency by the critical nature of this discipline: much of our focus is on evaluating the truth and logic of a position.
- Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible. We address this competency by enhancing the student's powers of analysis and critical evaluation, thereby enhancing the student's capacity for self-scrutiny and by direct examination of principles of value.
- Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live. We address this competency in virtue of the universal nature of this discipline: to study the basic structures of human awareness and action is to demonstrate the unity of humans in all times and places.

¹ All statements in this syllabus are subject to change. In the event of minor changes to the syllabus – e.g., to a reading requirement – the student will be so-informed by announcement in class. In the event of a more substantive change, the student will be so-informed in writing as well as by announcement in class.

² See <http://www2.winthrop.edu/philrelg/goals.htm> for the complete Department Mission Statement.

- Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively. We address this competency by developing specific tools for the clear statement and communication of abstract ideas.

This course also helps to satisfy your *Humanities and Arts* general education requirement. Your Humanities and Arts courses involve applying critical skills to the humanities and arts in order to understand and appreciate our diverse intellectual, institutional, and moral nature. That is precisely what we shall do in this course, by critical examination of basic philosophical theories of reality, morality, action, and human nature generally. In addition, this course helps to satisfy the general education goals of effective English language communication and critical thinking by requiring you to construct both oral and written critical evaluations of important philosophical theories.

Student Learning Outcomes

To be more specific, the student successful in this course will demonstrate the following:

1. An understanding of what is philosophy, including
 - a. Its dual status as both theory and practice;
 - b. Some of its primary concepts and issues, including those pertaining to metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, and action;
2. Knowledge of the structure and means of human understanding,³ including
 - a. An appreciation of the means by which concepts unify thought;
 - b. A grasp of the intension and extension of concepts, and the relationship between these.
3. A clear grasp of the means of communicating concepts (ideas) to others,⁴ especially
 - a. In writing, and
 - b. Where the concepts in question are abstract and/or philosophically basic.

These learning outcomes are the primary points in terms of which the student's work in this course will be evaluated.

IMPORTANT NOTE: THIS COURSE IS AN ONLINE COURSE AND WILL MAKE SOME DEMANDS ON YOUR ABILITY TO NAVIGATE AND MANIPULATE THE INTERNET. YOU MUST BE REASONABLY PROFICIENT IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT AND YOU MUST HAVE RELIABLE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IN ORDER TO TAKE THIS COURSE.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. As a philosophy class, however, it will make significant demands on the student's intellectual and especially verbal skills, even as it seeks to develop them.⁵

³ These Learning Outcomes help to satisfy the Department's *Critical Thinking Initiative*.

⁴ These Learning Outcomes help to satisfy the Department's *Effective Communication Initiative*.

⁵ For some indication of these demands, see the writing rubric specification in the Touchstone Program, <http://www2.winthrop.edu/english/rubric.htm>

Course Requirements

- Internet environment navigation competence
- Blog entries and comments
- Two short essays
- A final essay (comprehensive)

Text

- The text for this course will be supplied to the student via the course web-site. (There is no text to purchase.)
- I recommend printing course materials for easy reference.

Grading

- The elements of the course will be weighted as follows:

o Blog	400 points
o Essay One	100
o Essay Two	200
o Final Essay	<u>300</u>
o Total possible points:	1000
- Letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	940-1000	C	730-769
A-	900-939	C-	700-729
B+	870-899	D+	670-699
B	830-869	D	630-669
B-	800-829	D-	600-629
C+	770-799	F	0-599
- Extra credit may be awarded for minor additional projects if they arise in class.
- Grading Information: For further information on grading, grading marks, see my stylesheet: http://faculty.winthrop.edu/oakesm/Style_Sheet.pdf.

General Information

Online Environment

- Since this is a fully online course, you must pay particular attention to all written instructions!
- I will make every effort to make instructions and navigation as clear as possible. Please be patient in reading and trying to follow instructions. Do contact me if you have any difficulty; do email me or call me on my cell.
- Remember that since I am not “there” in a classroom to explain and respond to questions, you must make an additional effort in reading and following instructions. In some cases, this will be tedious! but it is vital to your success in the course.
- As mentioned above, you must be competent in the navigation of the internet, and have a reliable internet connection, in order to take this course. I will accommodate mishaps as much as possible, but I will expect you to know how to avoid common ones.
- Due Dates: Assignments are due at midnight on the specified day but you are of course free to submit work prior to the due date. My aim is to give you as much flexibility as possible in order to accommodate other demands on your time. If you are in danger if

missing a due-date, do let me know and we'll try to work something out, but please *plan ahead*.

- Updates: Please note that I will periodically update content files; you will find the date and time of a file's posting in its heading.
- Also: This is the first time that this course has been offered in an online format. Please be patient if you encounter any confusion, and please do let me know if you find anything amiss. Your feedback will be valuable to ensuring a successful course for this summer and for future instances of the course online.

Blackboard

- We will use the Winthrop University Blackboard online environment for much of the course. On Monday, June 3, you will receive emailed instructions on how to access this course via Blackboard. In most cases, you will login using your regular university login and password.
- Blackboard is located here: <https://bb-winthrop.blackboard.com/>.
- The primary navigation tool in Blackboard is the menu at the left side of the screen. It contains buttons taking you to your home page and to other central areas of the course. If you get "lost" in Blackboard, use this menu to return to a familiar place.
 - o If you don't see your side-menu, look for a small arrow (>) at the left side of your screen; clicking on this will pop out the menu.

Communications and Announcements

- I will post announcements for the class in the "Announcements" window on the course homepage. Keep an eye on this.
- I will email you with course information, as well, so keep an eye on both your email and on the "Announcements" window.

Turnitin.com

- We will use this site for essay-submission: <https://www.turnitin.com>. Please register soon, using the following information:
 - o Course ID#: 6517817
 - o Password: philosophy (all lower case)
- If you need instructions on how to create a Turnitin.com account or to enroll in a Turnitin.com course, please see the help files, here, http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/support/help-center – or contact me.

Policies

- The following policies are attempts to define a reasonable standard of conduct in class. I reserve the right to alter or interpret them as conditions require. Students wishing to be excepted from any of these policies may consult with me; without my express indication, however, these policies apply to all students at all times without exception. The student's continued presence in this course signals his/her full understanding and acceptance of these policies.

Attendance, Preparation, Participation

- Since this is an online course, there is no attendance requirement.
- However, you are expected to keep up with the syllabus schedule and to let me know well in advance if you either do not understand the schedule or anticipate being unable to meet it. I will accommodate your schedule and life as much as possible; please let me know in advance of any accommodation that you require. I cannot guarantee the opportunity to make up missed work if I am not advised in advance.
- Otherwise, generally speaking, you are expected to complete all assigned work, readings, etc. Remember that this is a short-term course, so that our pace will be *brisk*.

- Athletics and other University sponsored activities: I am happy to support your school-sponsored event. If you must miss class events for such activities, you must provide appropriate documentation prior to each instance. It will be your responsibility, in consultation with me, to ensure that you meet course requirements affected by your absence/s.

Other Policies and Information

- Personal Conduct Statement: Regardless of your sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political persuasion, age, or ability, you will be treated and respected in this class as a human being. Your continued presence in this course signals your commitment to act likewise.
- In the context of an online course, this means, among other things, that you agree to observe high standards of decency and respect for others in all interactions with other students in the course in our online venues. You must be as careful and considerate in what you say online as you must in person – indeed, even more so, since online one is more easily misinterpreted than in person.
- For further information regarding Winthrop University policy on student academic conduct, please see “Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy” in the online *Student Handbook*.⁶
- Plagiarism: It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on plagiarism. See www.winthrop.edu/english/plagiarism.htm. If you are found guilty of plagiarism in this course, you will receive an F for the course and I will report you to the Dean of Students for academic misconduct. You will not be permitted to return to class. If you are unsure of whether your use of borrowed information counts as plagiarism, consult with me, your English instructor, or the staff in the writing center.
- Disabilities: Students with medical or other recognized disability must contact Gena Smith, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities, at 323-2233, as soon as possible. Once you have your professor notification letter, please notify me immediately (and prior to the first test or assignment) so that I am aware of your accommodation requirements. If your accommodations affect every test/assignment, please remind me prior to each one.
- Winthrop University’s Office of Nationally Competitive Awards (ONCA) identifies and assists highly motivated and talented students to apply for nationally and internationally competitive awards, scholarships, fellowships, and unique opportunities both at home and abroad. ONCA gathers and disseminates award information and deadlines across the campus community, and serves as a resource for students, faculty, and staff throughout the nationally competitive award nomination and application process. ONCA is located in Dinkins 222B. Please fill out an online information form at the bottom of the ONCA webpage <http://www.winthrop.edu/onca> or email onca@winthrop.edu for more information.

⁶ See www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf.

Schedule

(Subject to change; students are responsible for changes announced via Blackboard announcement)

See Blackboard for all readings and assignments.

B = Blog entry due

C = Commentary on Blog entries due

June 3 Course Introduction Materials

June 4	What is Philosophy?	B	
June 5	The Human Mind	B, C	<u>SECTION I</u>
June 6	Philosophical Method	B	

June 7	Descartes's Method		
June 10	Descartes's <i>Cogito</i>	B	
June 11	Hume's Method and result	C	<u>SECTION II</u>
June 12	Kant	B	
June 13		C	
June 17	Essay 1 Due		

June 18	Aquinas		
June 19	Dostoevsky, Hick	B	
June 20	Kierkegaard	C	
June 21	Feuerbach	B	<u>SECTION III</u>
June 22		C	
June 24	Essay 2 Due		

June 25	Aristotle		
June 26	Kant		
June 27	Bentham	B	
June 28	Nietzsche	C	<u>SECTION IV</u>
July 1	Kierkegaard	B	
July 2	Sartre	C	

July 3 Final Essay Due