

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY



# PHI 201

# CLASS OVERVIEW

## INSTRUCTOR

Taylor R. Genovese, Ph.D.

(he/him/his)

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Web: [taylorgenovese.com](http://taylorgenovese.com)

Office: Hudson Hall 408M

Office Hours: Mondays: 10:00am–12:00pm

Tuesdays: 9:00am–10:00am

Thursdays: 9:00am–10:00am

**Note on communication:** I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 hours. However, please note that I only check and respond to email between 8am and 5pm, Monday through Friday.

## DETAILED COURSE INFORMATION

PHI 201 – Introduction to Philosophy

CRN #: 5027

3 credit hours / Hybrid

Instructional Hours: 2.5 per week

Minimum Expected Hours Out-of-Class: 5 per week

## MEETING INFORMATION

Spring 2025

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30pm–4:45pm

SUNY – Dutchess Community College

Hudson Hall 523

# COURSE INFORMATION

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course involves a survey of representative problems in some of the major areas of philosophy, and the positions of different schools of philosophic thought on these problems. Topics considered include free will, the problem of religious belief, knowledge and truth, the problem of the self, morality, reality and being, and the problem of the external world.

## COURSE THEME

This course is an introduction to philosophy—with the key word being *an*. In this course, you will get an overview of various philosophical perspectives, but, as those who are interested in philosophy might notice, much of the “philosophical canon” is missing. This is a deliberate choice—but not one made out of spite, malice, or hubris. Rather, the curation of topics for this course is meant to expose you to a wide *variety* of philosophical traditions and/or modes of thinking, from ancient to contemporary.

This class may be challenging. Some topics may require long stints of difficult reading and some topics may challenge your conceptions of how the world works (or should work). This is all done in service to the paramount goal of this course—and, consequently, one of the most difficult tasks that human beings can undertake—to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Identify and define core concepts and vocabulary utilized in the practice of philosophy.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of key philosophical problems from the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.
3. Distinguish the positions of key philosophers on major philosophical issues.
4. Identify preconceptions underlying major philosophical positions, and critical difficulties with these positions.
5. Comprehend challenging philosophical texts through active and critical reading skills.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

There are no required textbooks for this class. PDFs of all readings will be provided by the instructor and can be accessed on Brightspace. However, there are several films that must be watched in this course. You may have to rent them if you’re unable to find them in the library or on a streaming service.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Exams (30%) There will be a total of two exams: a midterm and a final. Exams are taken on Brightspace. Each exam is worth 15% of your grade and will mainly cover the material presented in each half of the semester, although students will be expected to remember some philosophical concepts and terms from all parts of the course for the final. If you miss an exam without it being an excused absence, you will receive a 0 for that exam.
2. Paper or Project (20%) You will write a formal argument paper by defending a position on a common philosophical problem. The paper will have components turned in incrementally throughout the semester and the specific requirements for the paper will be explained in greater detail during class. It will be turned in at the end of the semester and must be between 1200–1500 words. Alternatively, you can choose to work on a multimodal project (combining writing with another form of communication, such as photography, drawing, painting, film, podcasting, etc.). If you are interested in a multimodal project, please see me so we can discuss specifics.
3. Journals (15%) You will write a journal entry at the end of most of the units of the course. They are due on Sunday at 11:59pm after the unit ends. The journal is an opportunity to explore your own ideas about the topics—criticisms, questions, and/or other reflections—and may include creative works. It should be *at least* one substantial paragraph (~300 words) and **should not summarize readings or in-class discussion**. This is an opportunity for you to draw connections between philosophical concepts learned in class and the lived experiences of your own life. Your grade will be based on the depth of your discussion and the effort apparent in the journal entry.
4. Film Responses (15%) Throughout the semester, instead of meeting face-to-face, you will have to watch a film outside of class. After watching the film, you will have to respond to a question on Brightspace that asks you to relate the plot of the film to philosophical ideas we are discussing in the course. Film responses will be due on Sundays at 11:59pm.

*For fellow Letterboxd users, the films are on this list: [https://boxd.it/AUzIO\\$5nYBwMG2zKOfggy7](https://boxd.it/AUzIO$5nYBwMG2zKOfggy7)*

5. Participation (20%) All students are expected to arrive to class on time having read assigned readings ahead of our meeting and attend the entirety of class sessions. Students must bring in a written précis to class that consists of a 1-5 sentence summary of the readings being discussed that day as well as one question you had while reading. Additionally, each class (except for exam days), we'll do some kind of in-class assignment. This might come in the form of group activities, a pop quiz, free writing, or something else. The reading précis and the in-class assignment cannot be made up (except in the case of an excused absence). These participation assignments are given a point value of 10, 8, or 5 out of 10 depending on the quality of the answers.

**Image credits:** Cover—Salvador Dalí, *Galatea of the Spheres* (1952); Page 7—Brenda Erickson, *Druid Tree of Life* (2017).



# COURSE POLICIES

## GRADING POLICY

As a general rule, late assignments are not accepted. However, if an extenuating, documentable circumstance has prevented you from turning in an assignment on-time, you may lose up to a letter grade every 24 hours that the assignment is late. No late assignments will be accepted in the last two weeks of class meetings. Late assignments from the first half of the semester will only be accepted prior to the Midterm Exam.

Grading Scheme

Grade	Percentage	Rubric
A	(95–100)	Work exceeds expectations and exhibits exceptional clarity, insight, or brilliance.
A-	(90–94)	Work shows only the most minor errors or omissions.
B+	(87–89)	Work has a few but major flaws, such as a misinterpretation, failure to address an important issue, triviality, glossing over difficulties, weak argument(s), lack of clarity or coherence. Plus/minus grading will be used accordingly.
B	(83–86)	
B-	(80–82)	
C+	(77–79)	Work has a number of major flaws but still displays a broadly correct understanding of the material. Plus/minus grading will be used accordingly.
C	(73–76)	
C-	(70–72)	
D+	(67–69)	Work shows that the student has not understood a significant portion of the material (or is not able to convey such understanding), but is still more right than wrong. Plus grading will be used accordingly.
D	(60–66)	
F	(0–59)	Work exhibits poor structure, an entire lack of theme or focus, a wholly inadequate understanding of the material, or is plagiarized.

Once assignments are graded, you should promptly go over them to catch possible errors—in addition to incorrect point calculations or disputable evaluation of answers. **It is your responsibility to detect such errors and bring them to my attention within one week after they are graded.** Do not wait until the end of the term to address potential errors in grading as it may be too late to adjust the grade. Grades will be updated regularly on Brightspace.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Dutchess Community College is committed to the principles of honesty, integrity, and ethical behavior. It is expected that students will recognize these values and adhere to all aspects of student conduct and academic honesty inside and outside of the classroom.

Academic dishonesty in any form is regarded by the College as a breach of academic ethics and may result in disciplinary action.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Cheating on examinations
- Plagiarism, the representation of another's ideas or writing as one's own. Examples include:
  - presenting all or part of another person's published work as something one has written;
  - paraphrasing or summarizing another's writing without proper acknowledgement (citation);
  - representing another's artistic or technical work or creation as one's own.
- Willingly collaborating with others in any of the above actions which result(s) in work being submitted which is not the student's own.
- Submitting work containing any content that was generated by an Artificial Intelligence bot or website when not explicitly directed to do so by the instructor.
- Stealing examinations, taking electronic images, falsifying academic records and other such offenses.
- Knowingly permitting another student to use one's work or cheat from one's examination.
- Submitting work previously presented in another course without permission of instructor.
- Unauthorized duplication of computer software.
- Unauthorized use of copyrighted or published material.

If, based on substantial evidence, an instructor deems that a student is responsible for a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, the instructor may take the following actions:

1. The instructor may require that the student repeat the assignment or examination, or
2. The instructor may give the student a failing grade for the assignment or examination, or
3. The instructor may give the student a failing grade for the course.

As an institution of higher education, it is incumbent on the College to ensure that students understand and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and that there be accountability in cases where students repeatedly violate those principles. In order to build an intellectual culture of academic integrity and ensure that students learn appropriate behavior in their academic endeavors, faculty and staff who judge that a student intentionally violates the Academic Integrity Policy shall report said violation to the Office of Instruction and Learning.

Students' right to privacy will be upheld, and all students shall have the right to appeal any action that results from this process.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance and participation is required for this course. Students are responsible for managing the usual range of events that life throws at all of us. That said, I understand that some events are out of our control—especially in our era of multiple concurrent pandemics and anthropogenic climate catastrophes—so unless it becomes habitual, I will try and work with you to make up missed course requirements. That said, my policy for missed classes is that students who are absent are responsible for finding out **from their classmates** what they have missed. I do not post or share slides or notes. As a courtesy, if you know you have to miss a class period, please let me know as far ahead of time as possible.

# IN-CLASS POLICIES

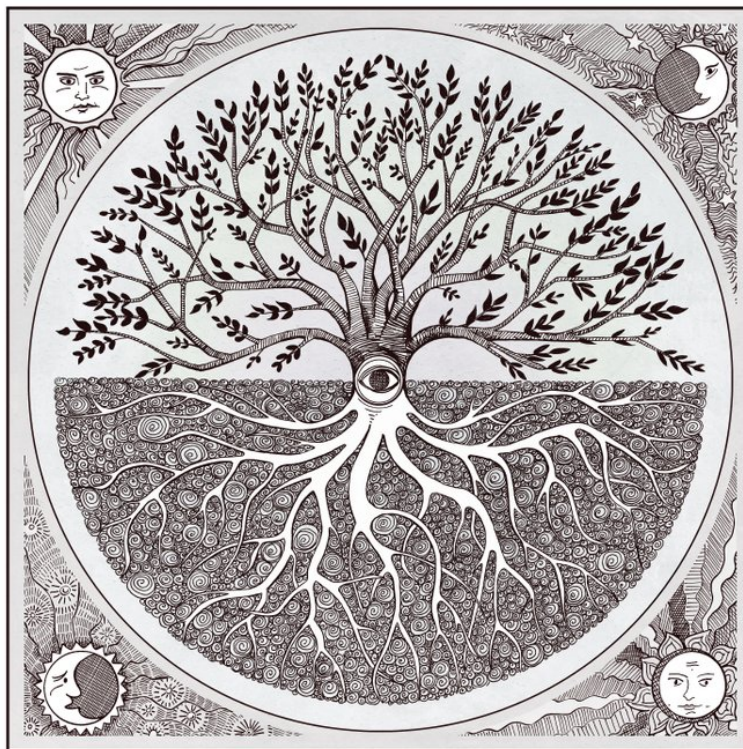
Please refrain from comments and side conversations during class time—even whispering in the back of the room can bother both myself and your fellow students. If you have a question or a comment, please direct it to me and we can either open a discussion or return to it at a later time.

Please silence all electronic devices while you are in class. I do allow computers **for note-taking purposes only**. If you begin using your computer/device for anything other than note-taking or in-class activities, you will be asked to put it away. Repeated violations may result in you being required to leave class and you will lose participation points for the day.

During class, please do not engage in any of the following (or similarly distracting) activities: sleeping, text messaging, tweeting, working on assignments for another class, putting on make-up, combing hair, making TikToks, or any other activities unrelated to the matter at hand in our classroom. If you must engage in any of these activities, please leave the classroom. However, if leaving the classroom becomes a disruptive pattern, you may lose your attendance points for the day.

# SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

I anticipate that we will follow the course outline as presented at the end of this syllabus, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and the interests of your fellow classmates. Be sure to check with a classmate after an absence to see if assignments have changed. I may also change the basis for the course grade; if I do so, I will inform you in-person and through Brightspace. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes as well as the responsibility for making yourself aware of them.



# STUDENT SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Dutchess Community College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Office of Accommodative Services (OAS) to verify their eligibility. IEPs from high school do not carry over to college. After documentation review and meeting with the student, OAS staff will provide eligible students with accommodation letters for their professors. Students must obtain a new letter each semester and discuss their accommodation plan with their instructors as soon as possible to ensure timely accommodations. [The Office of Accommodative Services](#) is located in the Orcutt Student Services Building, Room 103, phone number (845) 431-8055.

## TITLE IX

Dutchess Community College is committed to maintaining a positive campus climate and will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment including sexual assault, sexual violence, and sexual misconduct. It is the responsibility and obligation of all members of the College community to report and/or to assist others in reporting incidents of sexual harassment.

Please direct all inquiries and reports related to sexual harassment and sexual violence to:

Title IX Coordinator: [TitleIX@sunydutchess.edu](mailto:TitleIX@sunydutchess.edu).

For information regarding the DCC sexual harassment and sexual violence policy and resources go to DCC's [Title IX page](#).

For anonymous reports go to [Share at DCC](#).



# COURSE OUTLINE

(Note: this outline may change as the semester progresses. I will announce all changes in class and on Brightspace.)

## Reading Key:

- Précis required
- Précis not required; skim the reading

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<b>Unit 1 – What is philosophy?</b>		
T January 21	<u>Introduction to the Course</u> No Reading	
R January 23	<u>Why Study Philosophy?</u> ➤ Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" from <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> ➤ "Some Guidelines for Writing Philosophy Papers" from <i>The Norton Introduction to Philosophy</i>	Journal #1 due 1/26 @ 11:59pm
<b>Unit 2 – What is reality?</b>		
T January 28	<u>Philosophy and Society</u> ➤ Plato, <i>The Apology of Socrates</i>	
R January 30	<u>Multiple Realities</u> ➤ Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" from <i>Republic</i>	Journal #2 due 2/2 @ 11:59pm
<b>Unit 3 – Can we possess knowledge of the world?</b>		
T February 4	<u>The Evil Demon</u> ➤ René Descartes, "Meditation I & II" from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	
R February 6	<u>The Revenge of Buffered Selves</u> ➤ Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought"	
T February 11	<u>Identity and the Self</u> ➤ John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity" from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>	
R February 13	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>The Matrix</i> (1999)</b>	Film Response #1 due 2/16 @ 11:59pm
T February 18	<b>NO CLASS – MONDAY MAKE-UP DAY</b>	

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>R</sup> February 20	<u>Enlightenment</u> ➤Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" ➤Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" from <i>The Foucault Reader</i>	
<sup>T</sup> February 25	<u>Bullshit</u> ➤Harry Frankfurt, <i>On Bullshit</i> ➤David Graeber, "What is a Bullshit Job?" from <i>Bullshit Jobs: A Theory</i>	
<sup>R</sup> February 27	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i> (2004)</b>	Film Response #2 due 3/2 @ 11:59pm  Journal #3 due 3/2 @ 11:59pm
Unit 4 – Does God exist?		
<sup>T</sup> March 4	<u>A Demonstrable God and Divine Darkness</u> ➤St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Existence of God" from <i>Summa Theologica</i> ➤Dionysius The Areopagite, <i>The Mystical Theology</i>	
<sup>R</sup> March 6	<u>God is Dead</u> ➤Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Madman" from <i>The Gay Science</i> ➤William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism"	Journal #4 due 3/9 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> March 11	<u>Midterm Review</u> Catch up on readings	
<sup>R</sup> March 13	<b>Midterm Exam</b> Exam is taken on Brightspace and you must take it in a single 75-minute session. The exam will be available from Tuesday (3/11) at 5:00pm until Thursday (3/13) at 5:00pm.	
<sup>T</sup> March 18	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	
<sup>R</sup> March 20		
Unit 5 – Can philosophy be turned into action?		
<sup>T</sup> March 25	<u>Fourier and American Utopias</u> ➤Charles Fourier, "Selections Describing the Phalanstery" from <i>The Utopia Reader</i> ➤Albert Brisbane, "Association; Or, A Concise Exposition of the Practical Part of Fourier's Social Science" from <i>The Utopia Reader</i>	

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>R</sup> March 27	<u>Friends and Enemies</u> ► Carl Schmitt, excerpt from <i>The Concept of the Political</i> (sections 2–4)	Paper thesis due 3/30 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> April 1	<u>Cosmism and Transhumanism</u> ► Boris Groys, "Russian Cosmism and the Technology of Immortality" from <i>Russian Cosmism</i>	
<sup>R</sup> April 3	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch <i>Gattaca</i> (1997)</b> ► Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, "The Californian Ideology"	Journal #5 due 4/6 @ 11:59pm  Film Response #3 due 4/6 @ 11:59pm
<b>Unit 6 – What about philosophy outside of the West?</b>		
<sup>T</sup> April 8	<u>Indigenous Epistemology</u> ► V.F. Cordova, "Approaches to Native American Philosophy" from <i>American Indian Thought</i> ► Brian Yazzie Burkhart, "What Coyote and Thales Can Teach Us: An Outline of American Indian Epistemology" from <i>American Indian Thought</i>	
<sup>R</sup> April 10	<u>Non-Western Mysticism</u> ► Richard H. Jones, "Mysticism and Mystical Experiences" from <i>Philosophy of Mysticism</i>	Journal #6 due 4/13 @ 11:59pm
<b>Unit 7 – Can objects translate to ideology?</b>		
<sup>T</sup> April 15	<u>Borders, Walls, Lines, Demarcations</u> ► Shahram Khosravi, "What do we see if we look at the border from the other side?" ► Taylor Genovese, "Under the Shadow of the Wall"	
<sup>R</sup> April 17	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b> <b>Watch "<i>American Scar</i>": <i>The Environmental Tragedy of the Border Wall</i> (2022)</b> <b>Watch <i>Under the Shadow of the Wall</i> (2022)</b>	Outline or Rough Draft due 4/20 @ 11:59pm  Film Response #4 due 4/20 @ 11:59pm
<b>Unit 8 – Are we haunted by philosophy? Is philosophy haunting us?</b>		
<sup>T</sup> April 22	<u>Ecological Hauntings</u> ► Elaine Gan, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson and Nils Bubandt, "Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene" from <i>Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet</i>	

Class Meeting	Topic / Readings	What's Due?
<sup>R</sup> April 24	<u>Political Hauntings</u> ► Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>	
<sup>T</sup> April 29	<u>Cultural Hauntings</u> ► Mark Fisher, "The Slow Cancellation of the Future" from <i>Ghosts of My Life</i>	
<sup>R</sup> May 1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NO CLASS MEETING</b>  <b>Watch <i>The Pervert's Guide to Ideology</i> (2012)</b></p>	Journal #7 due 5/4 @ 11:59pm  Film Response #5 due 5/4 @ 11:59pm
<sup>T</sup> May 6	<u>Final Exam Review</u> Catch up on readings	Paper due 5/11 @ 11:59pm
<sup>R</sup> May 8	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Final Exam</b></p> Exam is taken on Brightspace and you must take it in a single 2.5 hour session. The exam will be available from Wednesday (5/7) at noon until 5:00pm on Tuesday (5/13).	
<sup>T</sup> May 13		