

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2022-23

Philosophy 1130F:
Big Ideas

Fall 2022
2 hours lecture, plus 1 hour tutorial
T-Th, 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
WSC-55

Instructor: Robert DiSalle
Office: Stevenson Hall 4141
Office Hours: T-Th 10:00-11:30 AM
(And by appointment)
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DESCRIPTION

This course will discuss some of the ideas that have shaped modern culture, politics, science, and philosophy. These “big ideas” are familiar and widely debated in our culture. What we often miss is how closely they are connected with philosophy. Many of the most powerful and influential ideas-- not only in philosophy, politics, and culture, but even in science and technology--developed through philosophical reflections on human problems. Historic figures such as Albert Einstein, Martin Luther King, Alan Turing, as well as many of the transformative thinkers of our own time, began by asking new philosophical questions about old and established beliefs. Reading and discussing original texts by these and other authors, we will try to understand some of the most revolutionary and interesting of these ideas from a critical philosophical perspective. We will talk about the impact that they have had, might have, or should have on our lives and thought. “Big ideas” to be discussed include: justice, equality, evolution, infinity, determinism, materialism, computation, artificial intelligence, theism, atheism, skepticism, certainty, evil, relativity, and others.

TEXTS

All assigned readings (articles or excerpts from books) will be posted under “Resources” on the 1130F OWL site.

REQUIREMENTS

Six short essays (about 450-500 words, each 8% of final mark), based on the weekly readings and discussion questions;
One final exam (40%);
Active participation in tutorials (12%).

OBJECTIVES

1. To grasp some of the most important and historically influential philosophical ideas
2. To understand how philosophical questions are framed
3. To relate philosophical ideas to larger issues in society, culture, and history
4. To understand the connections between philosophy and other fields of human thought
5. To develop competence in critical analysis by careful reading and discussion
6. To develop skills of oral expression and argument through class discussion

7. To develop writing skills through written assignments

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All

papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.