

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2025-26

PHILOSOP 1020
Introduction to Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A look at some central questions in philosophy, including: Does God exist? What is knowledge? Truth? Is every thing in the world a material thing? Do we have free will? How do we distinguish between right and wrong? What justifies political authority? By what principles should a just society be ordered? Specific topics will include: the ethics of belief, fake news, obligations to future generations, and civil disobedience. Examples and case studies will be drawn from a wide range of disciplines and areas, from the natural and social sciences to art and music.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who have done the readings, attended lectures, and participated in discussions in tutorials should, by the completion of this course, have gained an understanding of a number of core issues in philosophy and acquired or developed skills that will help them read and think carefully and engage critically with arguments and less structured mechanisms of persuasion.

TEXTS

All material will be available, for free, on the course Owl page.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

1. Two mid-term exams: 15% each (Dates TBD)
2. Two end-of-term exams: 30% each (to be scheduled by the Registrar).

The fall end-of-term exam will examine the whole term, including material examined on the fall mid-term.

The winter end-of-term exam will examine the whole term, including material examined on the fall mid-term.

Neither winter exam will examine material from fall term.

Exams will comprise a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

3. Participation in tutorials: 5% per term (2% can be earned by just attending; the remaining 3% will reflect your participation in a variety of activities over the course of the term. Details TBA).

** For students who would like the opportunity to write a philosophy essay, and to acquire or develop your essay-writing skills: There will be one optional short essay per term, graded by the instructor. One meeting of the class in fall term will be dedicated to discussing the essay and philosophy essay writing generally. Attendance of this meeting of the class and writing the paper are entirely optional. Your paper grade will not count toward the grade for the course, or even be recorded. **

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.

AUDIT

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

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No aids are permitted for exams in this course. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Use of any kind of AI on any work in tutorials in this course is prohibited.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

<http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html>

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

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.

SCHOLASTIC 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

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for

help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) 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 (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.