

# **Philosophy 103: Introduction to Philosophy — Provisional Syllabus**

Gregory Salmieri

Fall, 2019

*This is a provisional syllabus. It is meant to give the reader an idea of the subject matter of the course and of the amount and sorts of work involved. However, the precise readings and assignments, and the dates and weights of these assignments are all subject to change. A final syllabus will be provided at the beginning of the term.*

## **Course Description**

This course introduces students to philosophy by considering three perennial questions: “Is there a God?” “How can we tell what’s true?” and “What is the relationship between morality and self-interest?” We will consider competing positions on each issue defended by different philosophers, and students will be asked to articulate (and defend) their own views. We will also explore some of the ways in which these issues are interrelated.

## **Basic course and instructor information**

Course: Phil 103: Introduction to Philosophy

Meeting times: Mondays and Wednesday 6:40–8:00 PM

Location: [Tillett Hall 103A](#)

Course Number: 01:730:103:02

Index Number: 10945

Credits: 3

SAS Core Curricula: AHo

Prerequisites: None

Required readings and viewings will be accessible electronically.

Instructor: Gregory Salmieri

Email: [gsalmieri@gmail.com](mailto:gsalmieri@gmail.com)

Phone: 412-576-2990

Office Hours: **TBA**, location **TBA**

## **Assignments and Grading**

Reading assignments: A provisional schedule of readings is listed below. The actual reading assignment for each class session will be posted in the course calendar entry for that session. I reserve the right to alter the assignment until two hours after the end of the previous session, so be sure to consult the calendar when preparing for class.

Initial thoughts assignments (7%): There will be an initial survey and three short (200-500 word) writing assignments all aimed at getting a record of your initial thoughts on subjects

relevant to the class. Some of these assignments will form the basis for future assignments or papers. None of the assignments in this category will be graded with respect to their content. You will receive full marks on them if they are completed on time. The survey will be worth 1% of the semester average, and each of the writing assignments will be worth 2%.

Quizzes (6%): There will be three quizzes administered online via Sakai. Each will be worth 2% of the semester grade. The primary purpose of these quizzes is to assess whether you have developed the skills and knowledge needed for subsequent papers or assignments that are more heavily weighted. So a low grade on a quiz will not negatively impact your grade much on its own, but, if you score below a B on a quiz, I recommend visiting me in office hours to ensure that you are better prepared for the work that is to follow.

Argument Analysis and Assessment Assignments (22%): There will be four assignments in which you will analyze and assess arguments. These assignments will make up two pairs. In the first assignment in each pair you will produce an argument map of an assigned passage. In the second assignment you will assess the arguments in the map produced in the previous assignment. (We will learn how to do this in class.) Each of the assignments in the first pair will be worth 3% of your semester average. Each of the assignments in the second pair will be worth 8%.

Papers (35%): There will be two papers due over the course of the term. The first should be 800–1,000 words and will be worth 10% of your grade. The second should be 1,500–2,500 words and is worth 25% of your grade.

Online Forum (15%): Students are expected to participate regularly in the online discussion forum associated with the course, and 15% of the grade will be based on this. Forum participation will be graded on the degree to which it reflects sustained engagement across the semester with the course materials and the extent to which it contributes to the intellectual environment of the class. Thus, both the quality and quantity of the posts will be considered, and so will the distribution of the posts across the semester. (A flurry of posts during the last days of class will count less than will the same number of equally good posts spread more evenly across the semester.) By the quality of the posts, I mean how clearly written they are, how well reasoned, and how relevant to the subject matter of the course. Because a single excellent post can be worth as much as many mediocre ones, it is difficult to specify a formula for excelling in this part of the course, but I suggest writing at least one post every week from the second week of class through the last. Any student who does this will receive at least a B for this component of the grade, provided that each post makes some point that is relevant to the class that has not already been made on the forum or in class. It is possible however, to receive a higher grade than this by writing fewer posts, if the posts are especially good. If at any point you are concerned about this component of your grade, please email me and I will give you an estimate of where you stand. The forum will remain open until the beginning of the final exam.

Exam (15%): There will be a comprehensive final exam (administered during the assigned period) which will be worth 15% of your semester grade.

Class attendance and in-class participation: Attendance and classroom participation will not count directly towards your grade; however, you are responsible for knowing what was discussed in class, and so will need to attend regularly to do well on the assignments. Moreover, participating actively in classroom discussion aids one's understanding of the material, and usually puts one in a position to write better papers and forum posts, so I strongly encourage students to participate, and I occasionally award extra credit points for extraordinary participation.

A general point on grading philosophical writing: Most of the issues we will discuss in class are controversial, and people who have studied them for years have different opinions. This does not mean that the questions do not have correct answers, but it does mean that it's not *obvious* which are correct, and that intelligent and well-informed people can take different positions. When grading your writing on such issues, I will not consider whether I think the positions you take are correct. Instead I will focus on the extent to which your writing (1) addresses the issues specified in the prompt, (2) shows an understanding of the positions covered in class, (3) is well reasoned, and (4) is clearly written. Good reasoning and clear writing require using words and grammatical constructions with care to articulate precise thoughts. In assessing the quality of your writing, I will be focused on this rather than on considerations such as flair or complexity of grammar or vocabulary. I will say more about the specific standards for specific assignments as relevant over the course of the term. If at any point, you find the standards unclear, please ask.

### **Academic Integrity and Citation Policies**

You are required to abide by the University's [academic integrity policy](#) in all your work for this course—including in your papers and your posts for the web forums. This means always being clear when the ideas you are presenting are your own and when you have gotten them from other people. In papers ideas taken from others should be cited to the specific source. There is no need to provide bibliographic information when citing sources that were assigned in class, but please do provide it, if you cite any other sources. In forum posts and initial thoughts assignments, there is no need for formal citations, but you must still take care not to present other people's ideas as your own. If you got an idea from someone else, say as much. If you remember the specific source of the idea, name it, but if you don't remember, it is fine to something like: "I once read somewhere that..."

Suspected cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled in accordance the University's [disciplinary procedure](#).

If you have any confusion about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, the university has a helpful compilation of [online resources](#). If you have any further questions, please ask.

## **Dealing with sensitive issues**

Philosophy deals with issues that are very controversial, and it sometimes requires us to think critically about ideas deeply influence the way we lead our lives, that form part of our personal identities, and that factor into the way we evaluate ourselves and others. This is an aspect of the field that I plan to highlight in the class. Thinking critically about such issues often makes us uncomfortable, and if you make it through the whole semester without ever feeling at all uncomfortable about any of your ideas, then the course hasn't succeeded in its aim. The course should not, however, be distressing; and I will try to ensure that challenging ideas are always presented and discussed in a constructive and sensitive manner.

Nevertheless, there is always a chance that the conversation will become distressing to some students—especially students whose life experiences are very different from my own, and whose contexts I may not understand. So, if you find any aspect of the course environment distressing or unwelcoming (as opposed to merely challenging), or if you fear that it might become so, please let me know, and I will make every effort to accommodate you. Similarly, please feel free to exit the classroom at any time, if you find the conversation taking a distressing turn.

Philosophical discussions can occasionally raise sensitive, personal issues that are best discussed with someone other than one's professor. Should you find yourself in this situation, a list of resources provided by the University can be found in the next section of this syllabus.

## **Student-Wellness Services**

Just In Case Web App: <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### **Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Contact information: (848) 932-7884; 7 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901;  
[rhscaps.rutgers.edu](http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu).

### **Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA):**

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and

stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Contact information: (848) 932-1181; 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; [vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu).

### Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Contact information: (848) 445-6800; Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854; [ods.rutgers.edu](http://ods.rutgers.edu).

### Scarlet Listeners

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

Contact information: (732) 247-5555; [www.scarletlisteners.com](http://www.scarletlisteners.com).

### Provisional Schedule

This provisional schedule lists topics and readings for each class section, and approximate due dates for assignments. However, we are unlikely to keep to this schedule exactly. Always consult the class calendar for up-to-date information on what is due when and on what to read for each session

9/4 Due: Initial Survey (ungraded, but timely completion is worth 1% of semester average)

9/4 Session 1: Introduction to the Class

- Course Syllabus

9/6 Due: Initial Thoughts on God (ungraded, but timely completion is worth 2% of semester average)

9/9 Session 2: The nature and value of philosophy

- Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
- Ayn Rand, “Philosophy: Who Needs It”
- Kwame Gyekye, excerpts from *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought*

9/11 Session 3: Analyzing and Assessing Arguments:

- 12 Angry Men (Film)
- Gregory Salmieri, “Analyzing and Assessing Arguments” §1-5

- 9/16 Due: First Quiz (2% of grade)
- 9/16 Session 4: Cosmological Arguments for the Existence of God
- Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways”
  - William Lane Craig, “The Kalam Cosmological Argument”
- 9/18 Due: First Argument Map (3% of grade)
- 9/18 Session 5: Inferences to the Best Explanation, Arguments from Miracles, and Teleological Arguments for the Existence of God
- Salmieri, “Analyzing and Assessing Arguments,” §4.4-5
  - Paley, excerpt from *Natural Theology*, Chapters I, III, and V-VI
  - David Talcott, “The Fine-Tuning Argument: A Closer Examination”
- 9/22 Due: First Argument Assessment Assignment (3% of grade)
- 9/23 Session 6: Divine Creation vs. Explanations by Natural Selection as alternative explanations for Teleological Structures in Living Things
- Charles Darwin, selections from *On The Origins of the Species*
  - Francisco J. Ayala, “[Darwin’s Great Discovery: Design without Designer](#)”  
[PDF]
- 9/25 Session 7: Ontological Arguments for the Existence of God and Locke’s Argument from Consciousness
- Salmieri, “Analyzing and Assessing Arguments,” §4.6
  - Anselm, *Proslogium*, Chapter III
  - Gaunilo, “On Behalf of the Fool”
  - Anselm, “Apologetic to Gaunilo’s Answer on Behalf of the Fool”
  - John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV.X
- 9/27 Due: Initial thoughts on examples of knowledge (timely completion worth 2% of grade)
- 9/29 Due: Second argument map (worth 8% of grade)
- 9/30 Session 8: Atheism (and other issues raised by Sweeney’s monologue)
- Julia Sweeney, Letting Go of God
  - Charles Darwin, “Religious Belief” (from *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin*)
  - Genesis, 1-2 (The account of creation)
  - Genesis, 19 (The story of Lot)
  - Genesis, 22:1-17 (The binding of Isaac)
  - Judges, 11:29-40 (Jephthah’s sacrifice)

- Numbers, 25, 31 (The seduction of the Israelites by Midianite women, and Moses' destruction of the Midianites)
- Mark 11:12-14 (Jesus "curses" the fig tree)

- 10/2      Session 9: Descartes on the Need for Method and Cartesian Doubt
- Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, parts 1-2 and 4
- 10/6      Due: Second Argument Assessment (worth 8% of grade)
- 10/7      Session 10: Cartesian Doubt Reconsidered and the Implications of Fallibility
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 1
- 10/9      Session 11: In search of the foundations of knowledge.
- T.B.A.
- 10/11     Due: Initial thoughts on morality and well-being (timely completion worth 2% of grade)
- 10/14     Session 12: In search of the foundations of knowledge (continued).
- T.B.A.
- 10/16     Session 13: Pascal's Wager and the Moral Status of Belief without Evidence
- Blaise Pascal, "The Wager"
  - John Locke, "Of Enthusiasm"
  - W.K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"
- 10/21     Session 14: James' Pragmatist Defense of Religious Belief
- William James, "The Will to Believe"
- 10/23     Session 15: Plantinga's Anti-Evidentialist Defense of Belief in God
- Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Properly Basic?"
- 10/26     Due: First Paper (worth 10% of grade)
- 10/28     Session 16: The Greek Philosophers and the Idea of an Ultimate End
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.1-2, 4-5, 7
  - Plato, "Socrates' Argument for Hedonism" (from the *Protagoras*)
  - Plato, excerpts from the *Philebus*
- 10/30     Session 17: Virtue and Happiness in Aristotle's Ethics

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.7, I.13, II, X.6-8
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.

11/4 Session 18: Aristotle on Pride and Self-love

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.4, 5, IX.8

11/6 Session 19: Epicurus' Hedonistic Ethics (and Mill's)

- Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*
- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, excerpts from Chapter 2
- Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
- Ross, "A Criticism of Mill's Distinction between Qualities of Pleasure"

11/11 Session 20: Biblical Ethics

- Genesis, 22:1-17 (The binding of Isaac)
- Exodus, 20:1-20 (The Ten Commandments)
- The Gospel According to Matthew
- 4:23-7:29 (the Sermon on the Mount)
- 19:16-30 (Jesus' teachings on wealth)
- John's First Epistle, 2:15-17
- Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, 3:5-23, 12-13
- Dershowitz, "Nothing American about the Ten Commandments"
- Mohler, "The Secular Hatred of the Ten Commandments"

11/13 Session 21: Hobbes' Contractarian Ethics

- Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

11/18 Session 22: Altruism and Utilitarianism

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections from Chapters 2 and 4
- Comte, selections
- Strom, "An Organ Donor's Generosity Raises the Question of How Much is Too Much"
- Thompson, excerpt from "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"
- Singer, TED Talk on effective altruism

11/20 Session 23: Kant's Deontological Ethics

- Immanuel Kant, selections from *Grounding the Metaphysics of Morals*



11/25 Session 24: Kant's Ethics (continued)

- Immanuel Kant, selections from *Grounding the Metaphysics of Morals*

12/2 Session 25: Kant on Knowledge, Its Limits, and The Propriety of Belief in God

- Immanuel Kant, excerpt from the preface to the 2nd edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.
- Immanuel Kant, excerpt from the preface to *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*

12/4 Session 26: Rand's Egoistic Ethics

12/9 Session 27: T.B.A.

12/11 Due: Quiz 3 (worth 2% of the grade).

12/11 Session 28: Topic T.B.A.

12/13 Due: Second paper (worth 25% of grade).

12/16 Final Exam (worth 15% of grade). 8:00–11:00pm.