



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

## St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 100J Spring 2023

Introduction to Philosophy

2:30-3:50MW, SJ2 2002

### INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Bruno Tremblay  
Office: SH 2001  
Phone: 519-884-8111, #28248  
Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00am-2:00pm  
Email: btrembla@uwaterloo.ca

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Official calendar description:

This course seeks to introduce students to the nature of philosophy. This is done through the examination of core texts and figures in the history of philosophy as well as in the discussion of perennial philosophical questions.

Longer description:

The main problem which will be addressed in this course is the following: What is philosophy? In order to better understand the nature of philosophy, the student will have a chance to examine subsidiary questions like: What is the goal of philosophy? What is philosophy about? How does it proceed?, and also to get acquainted with some typical problems which this discipline tackles, such as : What and how do we know? What is the key to a better, human life? Is there a God? Etc. However, it must always be kept in mind that everything that will be done in this course will be done so as to give an opportunity to beginners to better understand what philosophy is.

This introduction to philosophy, therefore, will be done in two steps. The first step consists of a presentation of philosophy itself, a presentation which will be general but which will appeal to our imagination and our senses as well as to our intellect. As for the second step, it aims at helping us understand better the nature of philosophy through the practice of philosophy with the help of core texts written by some of the most important thinkers of the discipline.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To show the importance and necessity of a philosophical reflection in one's personal life.
- To foster one's desire to engage in philosophy and rational thinking in general.
- To introduce the context in which philosophy was born.
- To give a good understanding of what philosophy implies and requires.
- To give an opportunity to get acquainted with particular philosophical questions.
- To strengthen one's capability of reading and thinking about philosophical problems by oneself.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All required texts will be provided for free, on LEARN.

After each class, a message will be posted on LEARN so as to let students know what reading must be completed before the following lecture.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

The breakdown of the course evaluation is as follows:

1. Ten short pop quizzes (10 x 2% = 20%), each lasting approximately up to 10 minutes and to be written with no aid. **These quizzes will take place throughout the semester and without warning.** Their aim is to verify the students' completion (and to some extent comprehension) of the reading assigned at the end of the previous class. (N.B. There will actually be about 12 such quizzes, i.e. roughly one a week. However, only the best 10 results will be retained, at the end of the term. **This also allows for any quiz missed due to illness, self-isolation or any other valid reason.** Should a student miss more than 2 quizzes for a legitimate and documented reason, however, make-up quizzes will be arranged.)
2. A first test (20%), concerning the content covered since the beginning of the term and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. To be written with no aid. This test will last for 80 minutes and is scheduled for Wednesday June 7<sup>th</sup>, during class time and in our regular classroom.
3. A second test (20%), concerning the content covered between the first and the second tests and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. To be written with no aid. This test will last for 80 minutes and is scheduled for Monday July 10<sup>th</sup>, during class time and in our regular classroom.
4. A final exam (40%), covering all of the course content and made up of one or a few short-essay questions. No aid. This test will last for 150 minutes and will be held during examination period, at a time/date set by the registrar's office.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### I. ABOUT PHILOSOPHY AS SUCH: WHAT IS IT?

1. An allegorical and analogical approach: slavery, light, and maturity
  - Plato, *Republic*, VII, 514a-516c ("Allegory of the Cave")
  - Immanuel Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*
2. A more systematic approach
  - 2.1 Philosophy, simple ignorance, and the search for the fundamentals of things
    - Plato, *Laches*
  - 2.2 Philosophy as "love of wisdom"
    - Plato, *Protagoras* (various excerpts)
    - Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, V, 3, 3
    - Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, XI
  - 2.3 Philosophy and rationality
    - Hesiod, *Theogony*, 535-612, and *Works and Days*, 42-105
    - Fragments from the Pre-Socratics
    - Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief"

## 2.4 Understanding philosophy through

2.4.1 a tentative definition of what it is

2.4.2 a brief consideration of its division

2.4.3 a brief consideration of what it is not:

extreme skepticism and relativism; literature, history, science, and religion

- Aristotle, *Poetics*, 9, 1451a35-b11
- Charles Sanders Peirce, “The Fixation of Belief”
- J.-P. II, *Faith and Reason* (excerpts)

## II. PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION: A SAMPLE OF PHILOSOPHERS TACKLING PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

1. What and how do we know? In particular, what is the basis of our knowledge?

- René Descartes, *Meditations*, I-II

2. What are we? In particular, are we free beings?

- Baron d’Holbach, *The System of Nature*, I, 11
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

3. How should we live? In particular, in view of what general end or meaning ought we to organize our lives?

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1-5, 7-10, 13

4. Does God exist? In particular, can God exist if there is evil in the world?

- David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 11
- Gottfried W. Leibniz, *Theodicy*, abridgment, obj.1-8

Conclusion

N.B. As I will be experimenting with an expanded treatment of 2.3 (Philosophy and rationality) this term, it is hard to say with precision how that will affect the time we will have for Part II (Philosophy in action). It is possible that not all texts mentioned in Part II, above, will be discussed.

### COVID CONTINGENCY PLAN

If one or some in-person classes are to be cancelled by the university because of COVID, the lecture or lectures will be recorded and posted on LEARN by the instructor and students will be able to view them asynchronously. In such a scenario, any planned in-person evaluation (test, final exam, etc.) that has to be cancelled will also take place online, on LEARN.

If a student needs to self-isolate and miss in-person classes as a consequence, it is their responsibility to reach out to fellow students or to the instructor if they want to know what was covered in class during their absence, just as for any other absence.

### IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

For important dates about the beginning and end of term, holidays, reading week, course dropping deadlines, make-up class days, etc., see <https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/important-dates/list>

### POLICY ON LATE WORK, MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, AND MAKE-UP TESTS

Concerning missed quizzes, see, above, “Course requirements and assessments”. Make-up tests (or some other analogous solution) will be set up for students with valid, documented reasons and in agreement with University of Waterloo policies.

## **ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY**

Given the unfortunate behavior of a noticeable minority of students and the importance of in-class lectures and discussions in this course, **all electronic devices are banned from the classroom (i.e. must be kept turned off and away from students' desks and laps at all times).**

This includes phones, tablets and laptops. Students who do not comply will be asked to leave. Exceptions will be made only for students who present a letter from the UW AccessAbility Services, clearly and unequivocally stating that they absolutely need to use their electronic device in the classroom for reasons of accessibility.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Petitions and Grievances](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on [Student Appeals](#).

**Note for students with disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.