

## PHIL 201: Problems of Philosophy

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Fall Term 2022-23/ SGW Campus (3 credits)

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<b>Instructor:</b>	Natalie Helberg (Lecturer, Department of Philosophy)
<b>Office:</b>	S-210 (2145 Mackay)
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:natalie.helberg@concordia.ca">natalie.helberg@concordia.ca</a> (email is my preferred contact method; please do not email/contact me via Moodle, as I do not reliably receive those messages)
<b>Telephone:</b>	TBA
<b>Office hours:</b>	Thurs. 10am-12pm (note: there will be no office hours the first week of class)
<b>Class schedule:</b>	TuTh 8:45AM - 10:00AM, H 507 SGW

**Calendar description:** In this course, students are introduced to philosophical problems such as: What is the nature of reality? How does one know what is real, and how is it distinct from misleading appearances or illusion? What is knowledge? Does knowledge require certainty? How is knowledge distinct from belief? Are people free? That is to say, do they choose their actions or are their actions determined by causes beyond their control? If people are not free, then how can they be held responsible for their actions? Can God's existence be proven? How is the mind related to the body, if at all? What is it to be a morally good person?

**Course description:** We will grapple with problems that animate diverse nooks of the philosophical discipline, attending, when possible, to the dramatically different ways in which philosophers anchored in different philosophical traditions approach the same problems. What is philosophy? What is knowledge and how might we proceed to know? What is consciousness? Is the will free? To what extent do we remain the same selves over time? What specific philosophical preoccupations arise when we focus on other people? What ideas and principles should guide our attempts to be ethical? How should we respond to current political conditions? The course will acquaint students with a variety of philosophical subfields.

**Required texts:** A few texts must be purchased for the course. The rest of the readings will be available in electronic form via Moodle, thanks to Course Reserves. For electronic readings, look on Moodle under the week the reading has been scheduled for (and make sure not to forget that you must also do any readings from the texts you've purchased that have been assigned for the week). The texts that must be purchased through [Concordia Book Stop](#):

Rosen, Gideon, et al., editors. 2018. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*. 2nd ed. London; New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Fisher, Mark. 2009. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Winchester; Washington: Zero Books.

**Course objectives:** 1) Expose students to a number of key philosophical problems. 2) Provide a foundation for students who would like to persist in the discipline. 2) Incite enthusiasm for the discipline while giving students a sense of the remarkable heterogeneity of the discipline. 3) Provide students with opportunities to learn about and practice specifically philosophical forms of writing.

**How the course will run and expectations:**

We will meet in the room that has been assigned to us when the course is scheduled to run. Masks and social-distancing in the class are an option, though they are not mandatory. Attendance is not mandatory, but it will be very difficult to succeed in the class if you simply attempt to do the readings alone. I will be connecting the readings in specific ways as I lecture and the assignments submitted for the class that score the highest will be those which reflect an engagement with the live class itself. I will provide notes (via Moodle) indicating the main topics, ideas, and moves we made during lecture. That is: I will provide people with the broad strokes of a given lecture, but to know exactly what was said in detail, a person would have to come in and listen and make notes for themselves. It will be important to actively listen to what is said in lecture. Feel free to raise your hand to request clarification, ask other questions related to the course material, or make comments. **If you ever feel you need a longer conversation to make sense of what is going on, just pop by during my office hours! Please don't ask for elaborate forms of clarification by email (it takes too long to provide written responses to these kinds of questions; it's much more efficient to just clear things up face to face with a chat).**

Doing the readings will be key. You may find that you need to do some of them quickly (a lot happens in the term and we're forced to move in a fast-paced way). That's okay. The readings you choose to write papers on will be the ones that you have to engage with the most carefully and most intensely. It may make sense to read them quickly once and then go back over them while working on assignments more slowly. It's normal to find philosophical texts challenging! Grappling with texts of this kind will make you a better reader, certainly!

Do your best to start assignments early. Doing philosophy is tough and doing it well takes time. Assignments will ask you to explain specific readings and make your own creative/critical points about them. That is: it's not enough to simply rehash what was explained in lecture: you must understand the texts as they've been explained, convey your understanding in clear writing, and work with the texts to arrive somewhere new and compelling.

**Assignment requirements:**

**\*Note that you are free to submit assignments in French if you wish to.**

1) First essay (2000 words): 30%; due on Moodle by 11:59pm on Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> (topics and instructions distributed Oct. 1; papers returned Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>).

2) Second essay (2000 words): 30%; due on Moodle by 11:59pm on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> (topics and instructions distributed on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>; papers returned Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>).

3) 3-hour final exam (consisting of 2 essay questions): 40%; date TBA

**Requesting extensions and late policy:** To hand in an assignment late, you must have good reasons for doing so and must negotiate a new arrangement with me in advance of the deadline; otherwise—or at least barring exceptional circumstances, which will require documentation—a late penalty will apply to your work. You will lose 3% per day late, regardless of whether these days are workdays or weekend days.

**Grading scheme:**

*Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution:*

1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

*Numerical Equivalents:*

A- 80-84% 3.7 GP	A 85-89% 4.0 GP	A+ 90-100% 4.3 GP
B- 70-72% 2.7 GP	B 73-76% 3.0 GP	B+ 77-79% 3.3 GP
C- 60-62% 1.7 GP	C 63-66% 2.0 GP	C+ 67-69% 2.3 GP

D- 50-52% 0.7 GP	D 53-56% 1.0 GP	D+ 57-59% 1.3 GP
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I emphasize that A-range grades are reserved for work that EXCEEDS expectations and requirements. Outstanding, A-range work will be work that grounds itself in a rigorous engagement with the course readings and sets itself apart by advancing notably original ideas, by making unique connections between ideas, or by in other ways demonstrating keen philosophical insight. A-range essays will be clear and well-composed as well. They will abide by proper academic citation requirements.

***The evaluation scheme and more in light of extraordinary circumstances:*** In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the [Academic Regulations](#), the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

***Important advice:*** If a special condition or circumstance in your life may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. It will be treated with the strictest confidence. Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will work out a way of dealing with it.

***Accessibility:*** I will strive to make the course as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have accessibility needs that require academic accommodations, please meet with an advisor from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) as soon as possible to set up an accommodation plan. I welcome meeting with all students to discuss their accessibility needs.

***Undergraduate general assignment policies:*** Ensure that you keep backup copies of your work in paper and/or electronic form. This is good common sense. Don't make the mistake of typing up an assignment in a hurry on a library computer without saving it to an online account at the university or elsewhere, to a memory key, etc. Consider purchasing a small USB key that you can carry with you at all times with your work on it, or finding an online resource such as DropBox or SugarSync where you can store files. Also, develop good backup practices: turn on the timed auto-recover function in your word processor, the save backup copy function, and get in the practice of saving versions of your work under a new name when you start making drastic revisions (or use version management functions of your word processor). Also note that according to the calendar (16.3.9.2) "Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them."

***Academic integrity:*** Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper

acknowledgement” (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are highly disruptive of the learning that we should be doing here. Should I detect any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing from the internet, from books, journals, other students, etc., I will report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs. The penalties for plagiarism tend to be rather severe, and in any case undermine your learning process. So avoid it. In case of doubt as to what counts as plagiarism, ask me. Cite your sources and inspirations; this enriches your ideas by showing their roots in the thoughts of other people, and does not detract from your exposition, articulation, and development of ideas.

**Note on intellectual property:** Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

**Note on behaviour:** All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications. Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

**Note on gender neutral language & human diversity:** In addition to all the other reasons for using gender neutral language and language that attends to human diversity, there are

philosophical reason for this too. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life and ideas. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise we build in and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender neutral language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, that not all of them are “he.” And this reminds us of further diversities of human being. There are different ways of approaching the task of keeping gender and other differences in mind, e.g., substituting “she” where “he” might have traditionally been expected, alternating systematically between the two, using “she/he,” and so on. No formal procedure is adequate to the task, for the task is improving your thinking and that of our culture and future generations, and the form of thinking adequate to this cannot be set in advance. For helpful discussion and guidelines, Google: Warren, Virginia L. “Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language.”

**Note on pronouns:** All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. I respect this right and will do my best to satisfy any of these requests. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to me. If I mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise me as soon as possible.

**Note on sexual violence:** Concordia’s [Policy Regarding Sexual Violence](#) defines sexual violence as “any violence or misconduct, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault; sexual harassment; stalking; coercion; sexist, homophobic and/or transphobic jokes; indecent exposure; stealthing; voyeurism; degrading sexual imagery; recording and distribution of sexual images or video of a member of the University without their consent; cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity and/or presentation.”

The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.
- Concordia’s [Sexual Assault Resource Centre \(SARC\)](#) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the [Policy](#) for further details.
- Other resources include the [Centre for Gender Advocacy](#) and the [CSU Advocacy Centre](#).
- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia’s [Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines](#), which “strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student.”

**Territorial acknowledgment:**

I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

**List of student services/resources:**

[Counselling and Psychological Services](#)  
[Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides](#)  
[Student Success Centre](#)  
[Health Services](#)  
[Financial Aid and Awards](#)  
[HOJO \(Off Campus Housing and Job Bank\)](#)  
[Academic Integrity](#)  
[Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#)  
[CSU Advocacy Centre](#)  
[Dean of Students Office](#)  
[International Students Office](#)  
[Student Hub](#)  
[The Otsenhákta Student Centre](#)  
[Birks Student Service Centre](#)  
[Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#)

**Reading Schedule**

\*Note: We will do our best to keep to our schedule, but if some topics require slightly more time to cover, then we will allow them to spill over into subsequent weeks.

\*Note: Here is the full citation info for our main textbook for the course:

Rosen, Gideon, et al., editors. 2018. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London; New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

In our schedule, below, I simply indicate the author, title and page numbers for any given reading from our textbook.

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Readings</i>
<p>1</p> <p>Intro to course</p> <p>Sept. 6/2022</p> <p>Sept. 8/2022</p>	<p>Jacques, Derrida. 2002. “Privilege: Justificatory Title and Introductory Remarks.” <i>Who’s Afraid of Philosophy?</i> Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1-31.</p> <p>Russell, Bertrand. 1970 [1912]. Chapter XV: “The Value of Philosophy.” <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i>. Oxford: Oxford UP. 153-61.</p> <p>Rose, Gillian. 1999. “Dr. Grove or Goodness.” <i>Paradiso</i>. Shearsman Books (with Menard Press). 44-51.</p> <p>Plato. 2009. “Apology.” <i>The Internet’s Classics Archive</i>, <a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html">http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html</a>. Last accessed 5 Sept. 2022.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Finish material from last week and transition to new topic: The Project of Knowing</p> <p>Sept. 13/2022</p> <p>Sept. 15/2022</p>	<p>From our textbook: René Descartes: “Meditation I: What Can be Called into Doubt,” pp. 264-266.</p> <p>From our textbook: René Descartes: “Meditation II: The Nature of the Human Mind, and How It Is Better Known than the Body,” and “Meditation VI: The Real Distinction between Mind and Body,” pp. 312-318.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Contemporary Projects of Knowing</p> <p>Sept. 20/2022</p> <p>What even is knowledge? What is</p>	<p>Harding, Sandra. 1995. “Strong Objectivity: A Response to the New Objectivity Question.” <i>Synthese</i>, vol. 104, no. 3 :331-349. (Available through Concordia’s library system; link for Moodle still in the process of being generated.)</p>



<p>belief and when is it reasonable?</p> <p><i>Sept. 22/2022</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: Edmund Gettier: “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?,” pp. 143-144.</p> <p>From our textbook: William James: “The Will to Believe,” pp. 97-104.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Other Minds/Alterity</p> <p><i>Sept. 27/2022</i></p> <p><i>Sept. 29/2022</i></p> <p><i>Oct. 1/2022 (Saturday)</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: Saul Kripke: “Wittgenstein and Other Minds,” pp. 221-226.</p> <p>From our textbook: Maurice Merleau-Ponty: “Man Seen from the Outside,” pp. 228-231.</p> <p>Levinas, Emmanuel. 1985. “The Face” and “Responsibility for the Other” from <i>Ethics and Infinity</i>. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP. 85-101.</p> <p>*Trigger warning for the following text (the text thinks about female sexual slavery):</p> <p>Frye, Marilyn. 1983 “In and out of Harm’s Way: Arrogance and Love.” <i>The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory</i>. Berkely: Crossing Press. 52-83</p> <p><b>Topics and instructions for first papers released on Moodle.</b></p>
<p>5</p> <p>What even is ‘Mind’/‘Consciousness’?</p> <p><i>Oct. 4/2022</i></p> <p><i>Oct. 6/2022</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: Gilbert Ryle: “Descartes’ Myth,” pp. 325-332.</p> <p>From our textbook: J. J. C. Smart: “Sensations and Brain Processes,” pp. 333-340.</p> <p>From our textbook: Thomas Nagel: “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” pp. 356-364.</p>

	<p>From our textbook: Patricia Smith Churchland: “Are Mental States Irreducible to Neurobiological States?,” pp. 376-382.</p>
<p>6 Free Will: What is it? Do we have it?</p> <p><i>Oct. 11/2022</i></p> <p><i>Oct. 13/2022</i></p> <p><i>Oct. 16/2022 (Sunday)</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: Roderick Chisholm: “Human Freedom and the Self,” pp. 610-616.</p> <p>From our textbook: A. J. Ayer: “Freedom and Necessity,” 618-623.</p> <p>From our textbook: Susan Wolf: “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility,” 645-655.</p> <p><b>*First paper due by 11:59pm on Moodle (returned on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>).</b></p>
<p>7 Personal Identity</p> <p><i>Oct. 18/2022</i></p> <p><i>Oct. 20/2022</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: John Locke: “Of Identity and Diversity,” pp. 505-511.</p> <p>From our textbook: Derek Parfit: “Personal Identity,” pp. 520-530.</p> <p>Malabou, Catherine. Selections from <i>The Ontology of the Accident</i>. Cambridge: Polity. 1-15.</p> <p>Kafka, Franz. 2007. “A Report to An Academy.” <i>Metamorphosis and Other Stories</i>. London: Penguin. 225-235.</p>
<p>8 Moral Theory</p> <p><i>Oct. 25/2022</i></p>	<p>From our textbook: Plato: Selections from <i>The Republic</i>, pp. 929-934.</p> <p>From our textbook: Philip L. Quinn: “The Divine Command Theory,” pp. 879-891.</p>

<p>Oct. 27/2022</p> <p>Oct. 30/2022 (Sunday)</p>	<p>Rachels, James. 2014 [1986]. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism." <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>. McGraw Hill. 12-24.</p> <p><b>*Topics and instructions for second paper released on Moodle.</b></p>
<p>9</p> <p>Ethics Toolkit</p> <p>Nov. 1/2022</p> <p>Nov. 3/2022</p>	<p>From our textbook: John Stuart Mill: Selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i>, pp. 790-797.</p> <p>From our textbook: Peter Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," pp. 678-683.</p> <p>From our textbook: Immanuel Kant: Selections from the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," pp. 800-809.</p> <p>From our textbook: Michele M. Moody Adams: "Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance," pp. 763-771.</p> <p>From our textbook: Friedrich Nietzsche: Selections from <i>On the Genealogy of Morals, Beyond Good and Evil, and The Gay Science</i>, pp. 831-839.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Margins of Philosophy</p> <p>Nov. 8/2022</p> <p>Nov. 10/2022</p> <p>Nov. 13/2022 (Sunday)</p>	<p>Plato. 2009. "Phaedrus." The Internet's Classics Archive, <a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html">http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html</a>. Last accessed 5 Sept. 2022.</p> <p>Dotson, Kristie. 2012. "How is This Paper Philosophy?" <i>Comparative Philosophy</i>, vol. 3, issue 1, 3-29.</p> <p><b>*Second paper due by 11:59pm on Moodle (returned on Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>).</b></p>
<p>11</p> <p>Political Philosophy</p> <p>Nov. 15/2022</p>	<p>Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1993 [1848]. "The Communist Manifesto." Project Gutenberg. Link to e-text also available through Moodle (<a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61/61-h/61-h.htm">https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61/61-h/61-h.htm</a>).</p>

<p><i>Nov. 17/2022</i></p>	<p>Continuing with “The Communist Manifesto.” Optional: Begin reading: Fisher, Mark. 2009. <i>Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?</i> Winchester; Washington: Zero Books.</p>
<p>12 Political Philosophy</p> <p><i>Nov. 22/2022</i></p> <p><i>Nov. 24/2022</i></p>	<p>Fisher, Mark. 2009. <i>Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?</i> Winchester; Washington: Zero Books.</p> <p>Continue with <i>Capitalist Realism</i>.</p>
<p>13 Thinking about Contemporary Affect</p> <p><i>Nov. 29/2022</i></p> <p><i>Dec. 1/2022</i></p>	<p>Finish up with <i>Capitalist Realism</i>.</p> <p>Berlant, Lauren. 2011. “Chapter 1: Cruel Optimism.” <i>Cruel Optimism</i>. Duke UP. 23-49</p>
<p>14 Last week!</p> <p><i>Dec. 6/2022</i></p>	<p>Last day of class! No new readings! We’ll plan to use the class to wrap up some material (we’ll still have material to wrap up if use more time than scheduled to treat certain topics earlier in the term).</p>
<p>Exam Period</p> <p><i>Dec. 9-Dec. 22/2022</i></p>	<p>3-Hour Final Exam: DATE TBA</p>

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