



Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 101; SPRING 2023



SYLLABUS

Class Meeting times: UTR: 10:00-10:50am; Room: B208

Instructional Modality: In-class Instruction

Instructor: Dr. Andrei G. Zavaliy, *Professor of Philosophy*

Office Hours: UTR, 12:00-13:00pm; MW, 10:30-12:30 or by request.

Office Phone and Location: Ext. 3604; G332

E-MAIL: azavaliy@auk.edu.kw

Email Communication Policy:

Please be sure to write **your full name and indicate which class and section** you are taking when you send me an email. **Email without this crucial identifying information will be ignored.** If you have a question, please check the syllabus first and if your question is not answered there, then please feel free to send an email and I will be happy to clarify. I respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them; if I do not respond within 24 hours, please re-send the email.

AUK Mission Statement:

The American University of Kuwait is a liberal arts institution dedicated to teaching, learning, and scholarship. The University offers programs that provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning and professional success. AUK enriches society by fostering an environment that encourages critical thinking, effective communication, personal growth, service, and leadership.

College of Arts and Sciences Mission Statement:

The College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) is committed to cultivating lifelong learning that empowers students to pursue technical competency in professional fields, self-awareness, a sense

of civic and moral responsibility, and a breadth of vision in the tradition of liberal arts education. The College offers quality undergraduate programs leading to a bachelor's degree.

COURSE DESCRIPTION and LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The main purpose of this course is to introduce a student to the major issues in contemporary philosophy, enhance the ability to read carefully and analyze the complicated textual material, and be able to relate the philosophical problems discussed in class to one's personal experience. We will take a more topic-oriented rather than historical approach to philosophy, which will require the introduction of some technical terminology and a number of new conceptual schemes. Strong participation in the classroom as well as an honest try to understand and absorb the material on your own is crucial for completing the course successfully.

In addition to the philosophy-specific introductory goal, the successful completion of the course will enhance the student's performance in these four general areas of learning:

1. **General Problem Solving.** The study of philosophy enhances, in a way no other activity does, one's problem-solving capacities. It helps one to analyze concepts, definitions, arguments and problems. It contributes to one's capacity to organize ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from masses of information.
2. **Communication Skills.** Philosophy also contributes uniquely to the development of expressive and communicative powers. It provides some of the basic tools of self-expression—for instance, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic arguments—that other fields either do not use, or use less extensively. It helps one to express what is distinctive of one's view; enhances one's ability to explain difficult material; and helps one to eliminate ambiguities and vagueness from one's writing and speech.
3. **Persuasive Powers.** Philosophy provides training in the construction of clear formulations, good arguments, and apt examples. It thereby helps one develop the ability to be convincing. One learns to build and defend one's own views, to appreciate competing positions, and to indicate forcefully why one considers one's own views preferable to alternatives.
4. **Writing Skills.** Philosophy teaches interpretive writing through its examination of challenging texts, comparative writing through emphasis on fairness to alternative positions, argumentative writing through developing students' ability to establish their own views, and descriptive writing through detailed portrayal of concrete examples. Originality is also encouraged, and students are urged to use their imagination in developing their own ideas.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

CLO1:	Summarize the main problems of philosophy as they have been developed in the Western world.
CLO2:	Add evidence from personal experience/observation to both support and challenge the solutions to various philosophical problems
CLO3:	Analyze information that corroborates and refutes claims contained within a work of philosophy.
CLO4:	Identify similarities and differences between various theories in philosophy, and to analyze the impact of these theories to the development of science and culture in general.
CLO5:	Express one's own understanding of philosophical puzzle in a formal paper and oral presentation.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- There is no need to purchase any e-book or paper book at this point.
- All the required reading materials will be distributed posted on Moodle as PDF files. It is recommended though that you print out the reading assignment – since it is often easier to absorb the material typed on a paper – especially if the material is complicated.
 - The Reading Assignments will be taken from the following two textbooks (also available as hard copies in the library):
 - N. Rauhut, “Ultimate Questions: Thinking about Philosophy.” Pearson. (*Book 1*)
 - “Readings on the Ultimate Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy,” edited by N. Rauhut, Pearson. (*Anthology - Book 2*)

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Any student who misses MORE THAN 15% of class sessions of any course during a semester should expect to receive an (FN), unless s/he submits documented evidence to the course instructor of inpatient medical care, death of an immediate family member, academic instructional activities, or national athletic activities. If excused, students are required to satisfy all coursework due or assigned during their absence, as determined by the course instructor. If a student does not submit documented evidence for her/his absence exceeding the limit, it is the student’s responsibility to withdraw from the course by the specified deadline, as indicated on the Academic Calendar. Students who withdraw from a course receive a grade of “W.” Students who do not withdraw from a course nor submit supporting documents for excessive absences should expect to receive a grade of “FN” (failure for non-attendance).”

THE 8-MINUTE RULE: You will not be able to sign the attendance sheet if you are more than 8 minutes late, and you’ll have to take the absence. Leaving the class early will amount to an absence from the class as well even if you sign the attendance sheet.

YOU NEED NOT EMAIL ME EXPLAINING OR ANNOUNCING YOUR ABSENCE. JUST MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT EXCEED THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF ABSENCES ALLOWED

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The American University of Kuwait regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values and standards of intellectual honesty. The guiding principle of academic integrity shall be that a student's submitted work, examinations, and projects must be that of the student's own work. The University is committed to enforcing its Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the University’s Academic Integrity Procedures. It is strongly suggested that you educate yourself about what constitutes plagiarism by visiting www.plagiarism.org.

Academic Support:

Learning Support Services focuses on empowering students to become independent and successful learners by developing their literacy skills, enhancing their understanding, and helping them improve their academic and study skills. Learning Support Services is comprised of two centers: the Tutoring Center and the Writing Center. The Tutoring Center provides free academic support in various subjects to AUK student. Email: tutoringcenter@auk.edu.kw.

The Writing Center provides multilingual support (English, Arabic, French, and Spanish) through individual or small-group consultations. Email: writingcenter@auk.edu.kw

LIBRARY RESOURCES:

The AUK Library provides you with the necessary support to conduct research and find additional readings for your class work. Need to research but don't know where to start? Not sure how to find and use online resources (books, data, articles...etc.)? Not sure how to cite a source or develop a reference list? **Ask a librarian!**

Research help is available through email, MS Teams, Zoom. Contact the library at: library@auk.edu.kw or go to <https://www.auk.edu.kw/academics/Library> to begin your search!

Disability Accommodations:

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, kindly arrange for an appointment with Dr. Huda Shaaban (hshaaban@auk.edu.kw) at the Counseling Center located in front of Gate 2 at the earliest with the understanding that all disability-related accommodations require registration with the Counseling Center and are not applied retroactively.

Evaluation and Grading:

- Quizzes (4 in total) - 25%
- Midterm Exam – 25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Paper - 25%

(There is no extra credit work for this class.)

QUIZZES

There will be 4 take-home quizzes during the semester. All quizzes will be announced in advance. The quizzes will cover the reading assignments as well as the class discussions. If you miss a quiz – IT CANNOT BE MADE UP. However, at the end of the semester I will only average the 3 best quizzes. The lowest 3rd grade for the quiz will be dropped. Thus, if you miss one quiz you lose the privilege of having the lowest grade dropped.

The AUK grading system for the assignments graded on a 100-point scale:

A	=	94 - 100%	(GPA: 4)	C-	=	70-73%	(GPA: 1.7)
A-	=	90 – 93%	(GPA: 3.7)	D+	=	67-69%	(GPA: 1.3)
B+	=	87 - 89%	(GPA: 3.3)	D	=	64 - 66%	(GPA: 1.0)
B	=	84 – 86%	(GPA: 3.0)	D-	=	60-63%	(GPA: 0.7)
B-	=	80 – 83%	(GPA: 2.7)	F	=	<60%	(GPA: 0.0)
C+	=	77 - 79%	(GPA: 2.3)	I	=	Incomplete	
C	=	74 – 76%	(GPA: 2.0)	WF	=	Withdrawal with Failure	

The numerical grading system for the assignments graded on a 30-point scale (Quizzes):

A	=	29-30	C	=	17-18
A-	=	27-28	C-	=	16
B+	=	25-26	D+	=	15
B	=	23-24	D	=	14
B-	=	21-22	D-	=	13
C+	=	19-20	F	=	less than 13 points

- In addition to the regular quizzes, I reserve the right to announce several “**Reading Quizzes**” – based solely on the reading material assigned for a given class.

PAPER

The topic for the paper will be announced later in the semester. All papers are expected to be typed, double-spaced, font Times New Roman (or a similar font) size **12**, 1-inch (2.5cm) margins all around. Proper documentation of all the sources used in the paper is required. Your paper will be due at the end of the semester as an email attachment. The papers will be graded on a 100-point scale. Absolutely NO papers will be accepted 1 week after the due date. Students should be aware that their papers will be tested for plagiarism via www.turnitin.com resources.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

We will try to cover the following topics:

(The Reading Assignments must be completed **BEFORE** the class discussion)

WEEKS 1-2 – Introduction to the Subject; the Value of Philosophy:

- The Nature of Philosophy; Branches of Philosophy
- Basic Logical Concepts
- Deductive and Inductive Arguments
- Validity and Strength of Arguments

READING:

- “Ultimate Questions” (Book 1, Chapter 1 & 2)
- A. Mele, “Philosophy, a Bus Ride, and Dumb Luck,” (Book 2, pp. 15-17)
- B. Russell, “The Value of Philosophy,” (Book 2, pp. 33-38)

WEEKS 3-5 – Epistemology – the Study of Knowledge:

- The Nature and Definition of Propositional Knowledge.
- The Challenge and Value of Skepticism
- Global vs. Local Skepticism
- Epistemic Justification and the Ethics of Belief

READING:

- “Ultimate Questions,” (Book 1, Chapter 3)
- B. Russell, “On the Value of Skepticism.” (Book 2, pp. 62-70)
- E. Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” (Book 2, pp. 71-73)
- Rene Descartes, “Meditations 1 and 2” (Book 2, pp. 43-54)
- Al-Ghazali, Selection from *Deliverance from Error* (Book 2, pp. 486-489)
- W. K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief.” (Book 2, pp. 471-477)
- William James, “The Will to Believe.” (Book 2, pp. 478-487)

WEEKS 6-7 - Freedom of the Will and Determinism:

- Hard Determinism, Libertarianism and Compatibilism
- The Thesis of Universal Causation
- The Problem of Moral Responsibility
- The Principle of Alternative Possibilities

READING:

- “Ultimate Questions,” (Book 1, Chapter 4)
- R. Blatchford, “The Delusion of Free Will” (Book 2, pp. 490-494)

- W. T. Stace, “Compatibilism.” (Book 2, pp. 119-126)
- H. Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (Book 2, pp. 159-68)
- R. Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self.” (Book 2, pp. 168-178)

Midterm Exam

WEEKS 8-10 – The Mind-Body Problem and Personal Identity:

- Dualistic Theories of Mind vs. Monistic views
- Popular Arguments for Dualism
- Descartes’s Arguments for Dualism
- Reductive Materialism
- Behaviorism and Functionalism
- The Problem of Personal Identity

READING:

- “Ultimate Questions.” (Book 1, Chapter 6)
- P. Churchland, “A Critique of Dualism.” (Book 2, pp. 263-278)
- J. Foster, “A Defense of Dualism.” (Book 2, pp. 279-283)
- D. Armstrong, “The Nature of Mind.” (Book 2, pp. 298-310)
- J. Heil, “Philosophical Behaviorism.” (Book 2, pp. 284-297)

WEEKS 11-14 - Philosophy of Religion:

- The Possibility of Rational Justification of God’s Existence
- Empirical and *A priori* Arguments
- Miracles and Life after Death
- The Problem of Evil

READING:

- “Ultimate Questions,” (Book 1, Chapter 7)
- C. D. Broad, “Appeal to Religious Experience.” (Book 2, pp. 369-379)
- David Hume, “Of Miracles.” (Book 2, pp. 495-500)
- Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways.” (Book 2, pp. 380-382)
- F. Coplestone & B. Russell, “A Debate on the Cosmological Argument.” (Book 2, pp. 393-404)
- J. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence.” (Book 2, pp. 446-459)
- R. Swinburne, “Why God Allows Evil?” (Book 2, pp. 459-471)

Final Exam

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES.

(Very) IMPORTANT POINTS

- No make-ups for Quizzes
- The *8-Minutes Rule* - come 8 minutes late or leave early – take an absence.
- Severe penalties are mercilessly applied if the allowed number of absences exceeded.
- No Extra-Credit work available for this class (don't ask for exceptions)
- Zero tolerance for Plagiarism – immediate 'F' for the course
- Zero tolerance for other forms of Academic Dishonesty (e.g., falsifying your attendance records)
- Zero tolerance for cheating during tests – immediate 'F' for the test.
- **THE GOLDEN RULE:** Students don't get what they “need”, or “really-really-really want”, or feel like they “deserve” – students get exactly what their score shows at the end.

There may be changes to the schedule and syllabus during the semester (except for the grading scale). When this happens, I will inform you in class.