

PHIL 150: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PROF. SID HANSEN

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FULLY ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is an introduction to the history of philosophy, its development, major texts, questions, and themes. Some questions we will explore: What is philosophy? Does God exist? What is happiness? How do philosophical questions relate to our everyday lives, at CSUN and beyond? We will read works by Plato, Descartes, Nietzsche, Sartre, Beauvoir, Césaire, and Anzaldúa. This class is fully online and asynchronous which means that there are no live class sessions. There are no prerequisites and there is no assumption of preexisting familiarity with philosophy. Students will complete online assignments on their own to meet weekly deadlines. This class fulfills the Critical Thinking component of CSUN's General Education Program.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no required texts to purchase for this class. All of our readings are available for download from our CSUN Canvas course page. Please let me know if you have any trouble accessing the course materials.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Read philosophical texts and synthesize their content
2. Engage with philosophy on a personal, social, ethical, and political level
3. Write clear and coherent essays that reflect one's understanding of a philosophical issue
4. Articulate theoretical positions clearly in front of a group
5. Respond attentively and openly to others

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Final Paper 25%

Midterm Paper 25%

Discussion Posts 25%

Weekly Quizzes 15%

Writing Activities 10%

GRADING SCALE

In order to calculate final grades, I will round to whole numbers according to basic mathematical rules.

A: 93 to 100,	A minus (-): 90 to 92	
B plus (+): 87 to 89,	B: 83 to 86,	B minus (-): 80 to 82
C plus (+): 77 to 79,	C: 73 to 76,	C minus (-): 70 to 72
D plus (+): 67 to 69,	D: 63 to 66,	D minus (-): 60 to 62 F: 0 to 59

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There are two major papers for this class each constituting 25% of the final grade. Both papers must be turned in via Turnitin on our Canvas course-page. Every week we will do writing activities that help you prepare for the midterm and final writing assignments. These activities focus on common issues in undergraduate argumentative writing. In general, I encourage you to contact me for assistance at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming a thesis to reflecting on your grade/final product. I enjoy working with students on their writing. While I will review rough drafts during office hour appointments, please be aware that I do not grade rough drafts nor do I review rough drafts over email. The University Writing Center may also be of help to you in this class. They offer virtual and in-person appointments.

WEEKLY QUIZZES

There will be a reading quiz every week. The purpose of these quizzes is to test your reading comprehension. Each quiz will have 3 basic questions about the reading assignment. If you have done the reading, the answers will be straightforward. The quiz does not assume that you will have fully understood every aspect of the reading material. Instead, it aims to assess whether you have read and tried to understand the reading. Please be aware that the quizzes constitute 15% of your final grade.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION

Unless otherwise announced, there will be a discussion forum every week. The goal of this forum is to give students a space to (1) explore the ideas found in the readings, and (2) to engage with one another in a reflective and thoughtful fashion.

Each week you will post in the discussion board by Wednesday at midnight. On Thursday, I will post a video in the discussion board. The video will address any themes/confusions/questions that came up on the discussion board. You will then post a reply to my video by Saturday at midnight.

Discussion forum activity constitutes 25% of your final grade. Late posts to the discussion board receive a 1 point grade penalty. The board is meant to center your own ideas and interests. I don't usually write comments on the discussion board; the video response is my main engagement on the board.

Here are 5 guidelines for weekly discussion posts and replies:

1. Posts should be at least 250 words (minimum). Video replies should be at least 150 words (minimum).
2. Posts are due by Wednesday at Midnight. Video replies are due by Saturday at midnight.
3. Your writing should be clear, insightful, and move the discussion forward. While my grading will focus on ideas and insights more than language or grammar, make sure that your writing is clear and accessible.
4. Your writing should directly engage the text. Make sure to include quotations, textual summary/commentary/paraphrase beyond what is referenced in the prompt and other student posts. If you share a quotation, make sure to use a parenthetical citation with the page #.
5. Your writing should be respectful and constructive. Offensive or rude commentary is not acceptable. I will monitor the discussion board but please bring any offensive or rude posts to my attention.
6. Your writing should be your own original work. Do not copy ideas from other students' posts or from internet sources.

Here is the grading scale for weekly discussion posts and replies:

4 points: Demonstrates an insightful reading of the text. Refers to specific quotes/sections in the text in an interesting way. Asks a thoughtful question about the reading that moves conversation forward. Does not repeat another student's comment.

3 points: Demonstrates a strong reading of the text. Refers to text in a thoughtful way. May be missing the reply or there may be a quality difference between post and reply.

2 points: Demonstrates a competent reading of the text. Refers to the text, although references may be broad or loose. Shares questions about the text's meaning.

1 point: Demonstrates a superficial reading of the text. Does not refer to the text or ask questions. Repeats another student's comment.

0 point: Shows evidence of plagiarism. Engages with other students in a rude or inappropriate manner. Less than 25% of the expected word minimum.

LATE PAPER POLICY

Students are expected to submit their papers on or before their due date. You will be penalized one grade step for every 24-hour period that the paper is late. In the first 24 hours, an A becomes an A-, and so on. If you are ill or are experiencing an emergency and it affects your ability to turn in an assignment on time, please let me know within 24 hours of the due date. Depending on the nature of the illness or emergency, you may be able to turn in the assignment late without a grade penalty.

EXTRA CREDIT

There are several extra credit opportunities offered to students throughout the semester in the Connect and the Writing components of the modules. Connect extra credit points will be added to the quiz grade at the end of the semester. Writing extra credit points will be added to the writing activity grade. Please note that extra credit points will be weighted to maintain the quiz and writing activity grade's proportion to the final grade. This means that extra credit points can bring your quiz and/or writing grade up to but not above 100%.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All student work should comply with rules of academic honesty outlined in [the CSUN 2026-2027 University Catalog](#). These rules ban cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism and they outline the penalties for violations including grade penalties on the assignment, failure of the course as a whole, and expulsion from the university. Instances of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Student Affairs office which maintains disciplinary records on the matter. Because I take plagiarism seriously, there will be discussions of the topic to make sure that you understand it. Ultimately, though, it is your responsibility to read and comprehend CSUN's policy as it is described in [the university catalog](#). Please be aware that, in my classes, the use of AI tools like Chat GPT constitutes plagiarism as it passes off another's work as one's own. Writing assignments that reflect the use of AI tools will receive a zero; students that use AI more than once will be reported to Student Affairs. Please be aware that you will submit your papers via Turnitin, a software that scans for plagiarism and AI.

Please be aware that, in my classes the use of generative AI tools like Chat GPT and Grammarly constitutes plagiarism as it passes off another's work as one's own. You will submit your papers via Turnitin, a software that scans for plagiarism and AI. If your paper is flagged for AI, you will be required to meet with me to discuss your writing process. If you fail to meet with me, a severe grade penalty will be applied to the assignment. If it

is determined that AI was used, a severe grade penalty will be applied to the assignment. Students that violate the AI policy more than once will be reported to Student Affairs.

TECHNOLOGY

This class is fully online and asynchronous so you will need to have regular access to a computer and a reliable internet connection. Since much of our weekly work will take place on our Canvas page, this course requires that you have access to the internet on a device that allows for the full functionality of Canvas. For our two main paper assignments, you will need to have access to a word processing program like Word or Google Doc. You will need to know how to download, save, attach and upload files. Beyond these basics, there are no special software competencies required for this course. In general, I encourage you to give yourself enough time to complete and submit your assignments because there is always the possibility of technical issues. If you have any difficulties with Canvas, you can contact the [CSUN IT Help Center](#) at 615-677-1400. Their hours are Monday through Friday 8am-5pm. Please let me know if any technical issues are affecting your ability to complete work in class.

EMAIL POLICY

Students are expected to check their CSUN email address on a regular basis. Feel free to email me if you have any questions about readings or assignments. Remember that I am your professor and not your BFF; polite (and professional) emails include a greeting (Dear Sid, Prof. Hansen) and a signature (Sincerely, James).

MODES OF ADDRESS

Please let me know if you prefer to be addressed with a particular name or nickname that differs from my class roll. I encourage you to include your pronouns in SOLAR and CANVAS. Do not hesitate to correct me if I make a mistake with your name or pronouns. You can refer to me as Sid, Prof. Hansen, or Dr. Hansen, whichever is most comfortable for you. Do not refer to me Mrs. Hansen or Ms. Hansen. I use they/them pronouns.

LEARNING NEEDS

I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter any barriers or obstacles in your learning, please let me know immediately so we can discuss whether adjustments can be made. I am happy to consider creative solutions as long as they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity. In general, if you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, I encourage you to reach out to the [Disability Resources and Educational Services Office \(DRES\)](#) or the [National Center on Deafness](#). These offices work with disabled students and faculty to develop reasonable accommodations.

BASIC NEEDS

Pursuing a college education is no easy task. And when there is economic, familial, and political stress, I know that it is so much harder to stay focused and stay on track. Please know that I am here to help in any way that I can. Given the size of our campus, there are also a lot of resources available to you, if you know where to look and reach out. Here is a brief list of resources:

- If you need services related to housing and food insecurity or mental health support, please [check out the CSUN With A Heart](#) website.

- There are two food pantries on campus, one is located in Laurel Hall and one located in the Women's Center. Don't hesitate to use them! If you are stressed about grocery bills or are skipping meals to make ends meet, these pantries are for you.
- Consider applying for the Matacare Emergency Grant which helps students with unexpected emergency expenses; the grant is up to \$1100 and does not need to be repaid.
- The University Counseling Services offers free individual and group therapy support to students.
- The CSUN Dream Center is here to support undocumented students, staff and faculty.
- Check out the CSUN Pride Center for LGBTQ+ social support!

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

I believe that the practice of philosophy can be an integral part of forging diversity, equity and inclusion on CSUN's campus. To this end, I've designed this course to represent diverse viewpoints within the field philosophy and to invite diverse viewpoints within our classroom. I've also designed the course to explore topics related to equity and inclusion. These topics include racism, colonialism, sexism, right and wrong, justice and the law, and morality. If you encounter any material or activity that runs counter to this goal, please let me know so that I can quickly address the issue. As part of my commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion this course is wholly accessible according to the standards of the Universal Design for Learning. If you encounter any aspect of this course that is not wholly accessible, please let me know so that I can fix this error.

HOW TO SUCCEED

Students love online asynchronous courses because they can fit into a schedule well, giving you flexibility as you work towards your degree. The danger of online asynchronous courses is that students are tempted to put the class on the backburner and then find themselves with a disappointing grade at the end of the term. At the beginning of the semester, set your intentions and make a plan for how you will prioritize this course. Review the syllabus and note the many support resources available to you on campus. Take a look at the Weekly Workflow section of this syllabus and think about how you will meet the weekly deadlines. Give yourself time to read the texts slowly and carefully. Most importantly, if you feel lost or overwhelmed, if you are confused by or disappointed with your grade, reach out to me sooner rather than later.

WEEKLY WORKFLOW

Sunday: Weekly discussion boards unlock at 7 a.m. Prof. Hansen sends a "Heads Up" email by Sunday evening.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: Read and post in the discussion board by Wednesday at midnight. Take the online quiz by Wednesday at midnight.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday: Reply to another student's post by Saturday at midnight. All other weekly work, including any "Connect" and "Writing" activities, are also due on Saturday at midnight.

Week One: Introduction to the Course

Watch: Meet Prof. Hansen

Read: Syllabus

Do: Syllabus Quiz

Discuss: Introduce yourself!

Connect: Start the Semester with a Growth Mindset

Write: Strategies to Overcome Procrastination

Week Two: Argumentation and Critical Thinking

Read: Plato, *Euthyphro*

Watch: Plato's Socrates

Watch: Euthyphro's Dilemma

Do: Euthyphro Quiz

Discuss: The Socratic Method

Connect: What are Office Hours?

Write: Intro to MLA Citation

Week Three: Philosophy and the Polis

Read: Plato, *Apology*

Do: Quiz

Watch: The Early Accusers

Watch: Socrates vs. Meletus

Discuss: Socratic Wisdom and the Fear of Death

Connect: Don't Underestimate the Power of Note-taking (Extra Credit)

Write: Thesis Statements

Week Four: Legacies of Philosophical Activism

Read: Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Do: Quiz

Watch: The Gospel of Freedom

Read: "How MLK's radicalism is forgotten by those who invoke him"

Discuss: King and Socrates

Connect: The Matarcare Emergency Grant

Write: Identifying Counterarguments

Week Five: Becoming a Philosophical Writer

Read: Reading, Thinking, Writing

Read: What is proof in philosophy?

Read: Tips for Writing a Philosophy Paper

Do: Quiz

Read: Argumentative Paper Grading Rubric

Connect: The University Writing Center

Write: Extra Credit Check-In with Prof. Hansen

Week Six: Thought Experiments as Philosophy

Read: Descartes, Meditations, Letter of Dedication and First Meditation

Watch: Why Descartes?

Do: Quiz

Discuss: The Dream Argument

Submit: Midterm Paper via Turnitin by October 3rd

Connect: Tech and Internet Support for CSUN students

No Writing Activity this Week

Week Seven: The Question of God's Existence

Read: Descartes, Second and Third Meditation

Do: Quiz

Watch: How Do You Know You Exist?

Watch: Descartes' Argument for the Existence of God

Discuss: The Existence of God

Connect: Study Tips (Extra Credit)

No Writing Activity this Week

Week Eight: Does Truth Exist?

Read: Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in an Extra Moral Sense"

Do: Quiz

Watch: Nietzsche on Truth and Lies

Discuss: Truth and Perspective

Write: I Statements

Week Nine: The Meaning of History

Read: Nietzsche, "On The Genealogy of Morals," First Essay

Do: Quiz

Watch: Nietzsche's History of Moral Values

Watch: Why Genealogy?

Watch: Section 13 The Lamb and the Bird of Prey

Optional Watch: How Hollywood Gets Nietzsche Wrong

Discuss: Truth and Historical Change

Connect: Food Pantries on Campus

Writing Activity: Passive Voice

Week Ten: Existential Crises of the 20th Century

Read: Sartre, selection from *Being and Nothingness*

Do: Quiz

Watch: Existentialism (Context and Vocabulary)

Watch: Bad Faith

Discuss: The Nature of Identity

Write: Paper Feedback

Create: Existential Coloring Book Activity

Week Eleven: Freedom and the Human Condition

Read: Sartre, "The Humanism of Existentialism"

Do: Quiz

Watch: Sartre and Existential Choice

Discuss: Hyperbolic Freedom

Connect: University Counseling

Write: Sentence Variety

Week Twelve: What does it mean to be a woman?

Do: Quiz

Watch: What is Woman?

Watch: Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism

Discuss: Existentialism and Feminism

Connect: LAPL Freebies

Write: Quotation

Week Thirteen: Addressing Racism in Western Thought

Read: Césaire, selection from *Discourse on Colonialism*

Do: Quiz

Watch: Aime Césaire 1913-2008

Watch: 500 Years of European Colonization

Discuss: Césaire's View of Racism

Connect: One Step at a Time

Write: Thesis Statement Peer Review

Week Fourteen: New Consciousness

Read: Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness"

Do: Quiz

Watch: Anzaldúa and Mestiza Identity

Discuss: Contemporary Borderlands

Week Fifteen: Last Week of Semester

Discuss: Reflect on Course Themes

Submit: Final Paper via Turnitin on 12/12