

Ashoka University | Spring 2021

PHI-1000-4

# Introduction to Philosophy

TF 2:50–4:20 | Classroom: online

## INSTRUCTOR:

**Juliana Lima**

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My Office: online | Office Hours: MTWF 4:30–5

## TEACHING ASSISTANT:

**Ritam Chakraborty**

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Online | Office Hours: M 7-8PM

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This is an Introduction to Philosophy course. We will read and discuss theories about traditional topics in philosophy about the nature of mind, the nature of knowledge, and personal identity. But we will also discuss more recent topics, such as, social epistemology: how knowledge and desires we have come from others, and how to avoid falling into epistemic “traps”, such as echo chambers and epistemic bubbles. colonization – what (if any) rights did Europeans have over the land in Latin America?

The assignments in this course are designed not only to evaluate students’ understanding of the content, but also to develop transferable skills, like basic research abilities, text interpretation, written and presentation skills, and team-work experience.

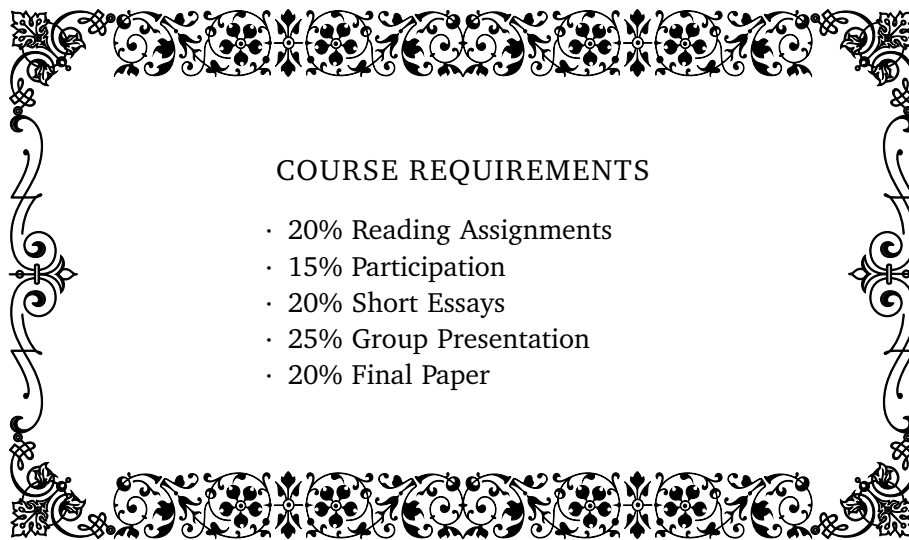
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	STUDENT OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand basic concepts and distinctions in the readings and theories.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize and explain positions and concepts clearly and precisely.</li><li>• Extract and charitably reconstruct arguments from assigned readings.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage with selected important debates, positions, and methods in philosophy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply theories and concepts in new contexts.</li><li>• Use introduced concepts and distinctions in your own arguments.</li></ul>

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- Evaluate theories and develop original ideas on selected topics in philosophy.

- Construct thought experiments and arguments against hypotheses presented in class.

- Compare theories and understand theoretical implications of different views



#### *Reading Assignments (20%)*

Reading Assignments take the form of quiz, reflection paper, or exercise sheet. Each reading assignment is worth 2%. If there are more than 10 reading assignments, the lowest scoring assignments will be ignored.

#### *Participation (15%)*

Participation grade will be based on student's engagement throughout the course at the instructor discretion. Students can show engagement by participating in synchronous meetings and attending office hours.

Do not expect a perfect grade merely for login in on Zoom/Google Meets.

If you encounter difficulties that prevent you from consistently participating in the course in one of the aforementioned ways, email me in advance to discuss alternative ways to show engagement in the course.

*Short Essays (20%)*

There will be more than 2 group presentations. Students have to write a short philosophical essay (**max. 500 words**) on at least **2** presentations. Each essay is worth 10% of the final grade. Students may write essays on any and as many presentations they like (one essay per presentation). If a student submit more than 2 essays, the lowest scoring essays will be ignored.

*Group Presentation (10-20min; 5-10min q&a) (25%)*

Presentations will happen throughout the semester. Groups will be of 3 to 4 students. For this activity, each group will have to submit a short essay (**max. 750 words**) the day before their presentation is scheduled, (2) give an in class/recorded presentation, and (3) ask questions in other presentations. Students will be graded as follows: 10% report (one per group); 10% presentation (one per group), 5% questions asked on other presentations (individual).

*Final Paper (20%)*

First version of the paper (**max. 1.500 words**) is due on **May 4<sup>th</sup>**, Tuesday, by 11:59pm. Students choose which prompt to address (**only one** prompt). Prompts will be made available at least 2 weeks before the due date.

**NOTE:** Things change – the Fates are fickle. Information found on this syllabus is subject to revision as we progress through the semester: Readings and content may be added (or cut) depending on our rate of progress, and it may be necessary to amend the due date of the assignments. Revisions will be announced in lecture and posted online. It is each student's responsibility to keep informed of any changes.



If you are facing a major medical or another major difficulty that is keeping you from doing well in the class, contact me as soon as you can. I am happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But I can't help if you don't let me know about your circumstances as soon as they arise.



Please, don't wait until after the last week of classes to let me know about your circumstances. At that point there is virtually nothing I can do to accommodate you.

**MATERIALS**

- All course materials, information, assignments, etc. will be available on Canvas.
- All communications will be made through your Ashoka email address and Canvas. Please make sure you have turned on notification alert on Account Notification Settings to get an email when you receive messages on Canvas.
- If you haven't received an invitation to access the course on Canvas, please email me!

## GRADING

The usual grading scale will apply: 0-39% F, 40-44% D-, 45-49% D, 50-54% D+, 55-59% C-, 60-64% C, 65-69% C+, 70-74% B-, 75-79% B, 80-84% B+, 85-89% A-, 90-100% A.

Paper and exams will be graded based on the following **six** evaluation criteria:

**Bare minimum:** is the paper prompt or question addressed at all?

**Clarity:** Are the explanations of technical terms and arguments clear, understandable, and accessible to someone who is not taking the class?

**Correctness:** Are the explanations of technical terms, theories and arguments correct? Are the theories and arguments ascribed to the right philosophers?

**Originality:** Are there original cases, objections, or replies?

**Relevance:** Are there theses, cases, arguments, or any other information that are irrelevant to address the prompt? Is the paper lacking explanation of a relevant theory, thesis, case, or argument?

**Structure:** Does the paper have a clear structure, with introduction and conclusion? Are the theses, cases, and arguments presented in an organized way?

**NOTE:** While there is no evaluation criterion for grammar or typos, they may affect the grade if they are severe enough to compromise understanding. Before submitting written assignments always proof read them. Take note of campus resources listed below that offer assistance with essay-writing.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Your work must be your own. Submitting work which you have not composed yourself, or using another person's ideas without due credit, or failing to mark another person's words with appropriate quotation marks all constitute plagiarism. The instructor reserves the right to assess penalties for violations of academic integrity, which may include giving a failing grade for an assignment, for the entire course, or referral to a University disciplinary committee.

## STUDENT SUPPORT AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

### 1) *ACWB (Ashoka Centre for Well-Being)*

If you're dealing with depression, anxiety, or are just feeling overwhelmed, ACWB is available to help. They offer individual counseling, group workshops, and other resources to make the semester more bearable.

- First floor of AC-02 (previously called 'New Academic Building'), next to TR106
- [well.being@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:well.being@ashoka.edu.in)
- Book an appointment: <http://acwb.ashoka.edu.in>

## 2) CWC (Centre for Writing and Communication)

CWC offers workshops on study skills, assistance with essay-writing, and other free services that will help you perform well in your classes.

- Third Floor, Administrative Block.
- <https://www.ashoka.edu.in/page/CWC-66>
- Book an appointment: <https://ashoka.mywconline.com>

## 3) OLS (Office of Learning Support)

If you have any sort of disability - physical or mental, permanent or temporary – we strongly encourage you to register with OLS. They can then notify your instructors if you need certain accommodations during classes or during tests.

A disability can be something like difficulty seeing or hearing; difficulty attending class due to physical or emotional distress; chronic anxiety or depression; or anything else that interferes with your schoolwork.

There's no shame in seeking help for these sorts of things. Contact them as soon as possible if you need or expect to need their support.

- Book an appointment: [ols@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:ols@ashoka.edu.in)
- Request Support: <https://goo.gl/forms/8wYThiSMwv8f1G4L2>
- <https://www.ashoka.edu.in/page/ols-68#!/#section-418>

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

### *Overview, Introduction, Arguments & Thought Experiments*

<i>Week 1</i>	Jan 19	Overview of course content & structure syllabus, and get to know each other/test technology
	Jan 22	<i>Reading:</i> “AITA, that if Jurassic Park were real, I would tell my husband that he cannot go” ( <a href="https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/">https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/</a> ). Baronett, S. <i>Logic</i> , Chapter 1, § A, B, D, E, H.

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<i>Week 2</i>	Jan 26	No class: Republic Day
	Jan 29	Thought Experiments (cont'ed) Descartes, R. <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , First and Second Meditations.

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*Mind*

*Week 3* Feb 2, 5      Dualism  
*Reading:* Heil, J. *Philosophy of Mind*, Chapter 2.  
 Descartes, R. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Second and Sixth  
 Meditations.

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*Week 3* Feb 9, 12      Dualism (cont'ed) & Physicalism  
 Place, U.T. *Is Consciousness a Brain Process?*.

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*Week 5* Feb 16, 19      Physicalism & Functionalism  
 Westphal, J. *The Mind-Body Problem*, Chapter 3, § Functionalism.

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*Metaphysics*

*Week 6* Feb 23, 26      Personal Identity  
 Olson, E.T. "Personal Identity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, up to §5.

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*Week 7* Mar 2, 5      Personal Identity (Cont'ed)

*Week 8*      *Mar 9, 12: Midterm Break*

*Epistemology*

*Week 9* Mar 16      Skepticism  
*Readings:* Pynn, G. "Handout 3: Descartes's First Meditation"  
 Descartes, R. *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, First Meditation.  
 Mar 19      Lecture Canceled

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*Week 10* Mar 23      Lecture Canceled  
 Mar 26      Skepticism (cont'ed)

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*Week 11* Mar 30 Skepticism (cont'ed) Moore,G.E. "Proof of an External World"  
 Apr 2 No Class: Good Friday  
 Apr 3 Dretske,F. "The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge"

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*Week 12* Apr 6, 9 Social Epistemology  
 Readings: Nguyen,T. "Escape the Echo Chamber"  
<https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult>  
 Lackey,J. "True Story: Echo Chambers Are Not the Problem" <https://morningconsult.com/opinions/true-story-echo-chambers-not-problem/>  
 Eli Saslow & Derek Black - From Racism to Redemption in "Rising Out of Hatred" | The Daily Show (video)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7xFtzT88dw>  
 Apr 10 Epistemic Injustice  
 Readings: Fricker,M. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (excerpts).

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*Week 13* Apr 13, 16 Presentations Group #3 & #4

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*Latin America Philosophy: The Morality of the Conquest*

*Week 14* Apr 20, 23 Reading: Sepulveda & Las Casas  
 Kopenawa,D., Albert,B. & Dundy,A. - The falling sky - words of a Yanomami Shaman, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26)



*Week 15* Apr 27, 30: Reading Week  
*Week 16* May 3, 5: Reading Week



*Week 16* Final Paper  
 May 4 Due date  
 May 7 No Class

 *The End!* 