



ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE
Humanities Division
PHI 101 – Introduction to Problems in Philosophy
Course Outline

Course Number & Name: PHI 101 Introduction to Problems in Philosophy

Credit Hours: 3.0 **Contact Hours:** 3.0 **Lecture:** 3.0 **Lab:** N/A **Other:** N/A

Prerequisites: Grades of “C” or better in ENG 096 and RDG 096

Co-requisites: None

Instructor: TBA

Email: TBA

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description: Introduction to Problems in Philosophy is an introduction to the basic problems of philosophy such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy and aesthetics. In class lectures will give some of the background necessary to understand the problems and the various positions taken by selected philosophers. The readings assigned will demonstrate how various philosophers have responded to the problems. The readings will also be discussed and criticized in class.

Textbook: *Philosophy: Paradox and Discovery*, 5th edition by Thomas A Shipka and Arthur J Minton.

Note: In the class session schedule, all articles, except those marked with asterisks, are from the text: *Philosophy: Paradox and Discovery*.

General Education Goals: PHI 101 is affirmed in the following General Education Foundation Category: **Humanistic Perspective**. The corresponding General Education Goal is as follows: Students will analyze works in the field of art, music, or theater; literature; and philosophy and/or religious studies; and will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

Course Goals: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental philosophical issues, such as “free will” and determinism, whether it is ever right to disobey the law or the moral justification of political power; (NOTE: There are too many fundamental philosophical issues to enumerate here, but the instructor

should select one or two from the extensive literature keeping in mind that this is an introductory course in philosophy.)

2. critique the positions set forth in assigned philosophical essays by comparing how various philosophers deal with the similar metaphysical questions such as what is the nature of reality;
3. discuss various ethical problems from different philosophical viewpoints (e.g. Kant's categorical imperative, Mill's utilitarianism, and Aristotle's "golden mean");
4. describe various methods of acquiring knowledge (epistemology) and explain through argument and by historical example how there are many different methods of inquiry encompassed under the term "scientific."

Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs): Upon successful completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental philosophical issues, such as "free will" and determinism, whether it is ever right to disobey the law or the moral justification of political power:

1.1 research philosophical topics in the text, library, on the Internet and in periodicals;

1.2 compare at least two philosophers' positions on a given philosophical issue; and

1.3 identify and discuss one's own position on the same given philosophical issue

2. Critique the positions set forth in assigned philosophical essays by comparing how various philosophers deal with the similar metaphysical questions such as what is the nature of reality:

2.1 discuss different approaches to metaphysical issues (e.g., regarding the existence of God, Aquinas' teleological argument, Anselm's ontological argument, Pascal's wager, William James' pragmatic argument, etc. will be evaluated)

3. Discuss various ethical problems from different philosophical viewpoints (e.g. Kant's categorical imperative, Mill's utilitarianism, and Aristotle's "golden mean"):

3.1 describe in written and/or oral form an ethical issue faced by oneself or a friend and explain how Kant, Mill, Aristotle or some other philosopher might help resolve the issue

4. Describe various methods of acquiring knowledge (epistemology) and explain through argument and by historical example how there are many different methods of inquiry encompassed under the term "scientific":

4.1 describe rationalism as it is presented, for example, by Plato;

4.2 describe and critique empiricism as it is presented, for example, by Descartes;

4.3 describe and critique pragmatism as it is presented by William James; and

4.4 explain why the idea of hypothesis and data collection to verify is an inadequate explanation of the acquisition of "scientific" knowledge

Methods of Instruction: Instruction will consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, and journal writing.

Outcomes Assessment: Test and exam questions are blueprinted to course objectives. Rubrics are used to score the critical papers and weekly journals for the presence of course objectives. Data is collected and analyzed to determine the level of student performance on these assessment instruments in regards to meeting course objectives. The results of this data analysis are used to guide necessary pedagogical and/or curricular revisions.

Course Requirements: All students are required to:

1. Read the textbook.
2. Be an active participant in class discussions.
3. Complete all class requirements – two short critical papers, a midterm examination and a final examination *or* at least 2 tests and a final examination.
4. Take all exams as scheduled

Attendance Policy: Regular and prompt attendance is essential for academic success. Faculty members take attendance at each scheduled class session. Students are expected to attend and be on time for all classes. Individual faculty members may establish specific attendance policies. Attendance records will be turned in to the appropriate Division/Department Chair and/or Program Director at the end of the term and in the interim upon request. Any students with more than three unexcused absences will automatically fail the course.

Methods of Evaluation: Final course grades will be computed as follows:

Grading Components	% of final course grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments: Two Short Critical Papers Each student will write two analytical and/or comparative reaction papers to the readings. The student may pick a topic or issue that stimulates her/his thought and should react to it. (There will be an in-class discussion sharing some possible topics.) These papers are designed to enhance understanding of all the facets of philosophy. 	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Midterm Exam or Tests (dates specified by the instructor) The midterm exam will show evidence of the extent to which students have understood and synthesized course 	25%

content covered in the first half of the semester. Tests will provide evidence of student mastery of course objectives.

- 20%**

• **Class Participation and Weekly Journals**
 A perusal of journal entries will provide evidence of the extent to which students have mastered course objectives.
- 35%**

• **Final Examination**
 The final exam will be comprehensive and require the student to critically analyze the positions of the philosophers discussed during the semester.

Total **100%**

Grading System:

A	90% - 100%	Superior
B+	87% - 89%	Very Good
B	80% - 86%	Good
C+	77% - 79%	Above Average
C	70% - 76%	Satisfactory
D	60% - 69%	Passing
F	59% - 0	Failing

Academic Integrity: Dishonesty disrupts the search for truth that is inherent in the learning process and so devalues the purpose and the mission of the College. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- plagiarism – the failure to acknowledge another writer’s words or ideas or to give proper credit to sources of information;
- cheating – knowingly obtaining or giving unauthorized information on any test/exam or any other academic assignment;
- interference – any interruption of the academic process that prevents others from the proper engagement in learning or teaching; and
- fraud – any act or instance of willful deceit or trickery.

Violations of academic integrity will be dealt with by imposing appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty could include the resubmission of an assignment, failure of the test/exam, failure in the course, probation, suspension from the College, and even expulsion from the College.

Student Code of Conduct: All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible and considerate adults who respect the rights of others. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. All students are also expected to attend and be on time all class meetings. No cell phones or similar electronic devices are permitted in class. Please refer to the Essex County College student handbook, *Lifeline*, for more specific information about the College’s Code of Conduct and attendance requirements.

Course Content Outline: This is a tentative course schedule; the instructor reserves the right to make changes on it to make it better for the student’s development. Notice will be given should any changes take place.

Class Meeting

(90 minutes)	Topics to be Covered/ Class Activities
1 – 2	Orientation & Course Introduction/Review of Class Syllabus Introduction: What is Philosophy?
3 – 4	Reading: Introduction
5 – 6	Philosophy and Religion: Is There a God? Readings: St. Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theological” Thomas Jefferson, “God as the Designer of the Universe” William James, “The Will to Believe” Paul Kurtz, “A Skeptic’s Reply”
7 – 9	Philosophy and Religion: The Problem of Evil Readings: Mark Twain, “Letters from the Earth” John Hick, “Free Will, Character Building and Evil” J L Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” First Critical Paper due
11 – 13	Free Will and Determinism Readings: Clarence Darrow, “Leopold and Loeb: The Crime of Compulsion” Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existence Precedes Essence” William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism” Bruce N Waller, “Chanelle, Sabrina, and the Oboe”
14	Midterm Exam
15 – 17	Ethics, Virtue, and Morality Readings: Richard Furman and Thomas Dew, “A Religious Defense of Slavery” The Search for Objectivity, Introduction (p 265) Immanuel Kant, “The Primacy of Duty”

John Stuart Mill, "The Greatest Happiness Principle"

18 – 20

Epistemology, Knowledge, and Skepticism

Readings: Plato: "The Allegory of the Cave"

René Descartes, "Meditations"

William James, "The Pragmatic Test"

Second Critical Paper due

21 – 24

Philosophy and the State (an introduction to the problem)

Plato, "Our Duty to the Law"

Martin Luther King, Jr, "Letter from Jail"

John Locke, Excerpts from the *Second Treatise of Government*

John Stuart Mill, "The Utilitarian Approach"

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Communism"

25

Review

26

Final Examination

NOTE: A minimum of two class tests can be substituted in appropriate class sessions for the midterm exam at the instructor's discretion.