



**Philosophy 1300E (571)
INTRODUCTORY PHILOSOPHY
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

Instructor: M. Tait
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

A survey of selected philosophical problems, with reference to both classical and contemporary philosophers. Specimen topics include: the mind/body problem, the existence of God, perception and matter, freedom and determinism. Primarily for first-year students.

Antirequisite(s): Philosophy 1100E

Extra Information: 3 hours

Course Weight: 1.00

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**King's University College
Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 1300E: Introductory Philosophy
2025-2026**

Instructor: Dr. Morgan Tait

Contact Information: Email: mtait8@uwo.ca

Office Hours: *Office Hours information can be found on Brightspace.* Please email to schedule an appointment to avoid conflicts.

Prerequisites: None

Antirequisites: Philosophy 1100E

Description:

This course offers a general introduction to philosophy by examining the ideas and arguments of great philosophers. The ideas to be studied help us to better understand ourselves, our humanity, and our place in the natural world. Critical questions to be examined include: What is a 'self'? What is 'human nature', and is there such a thing? What constitutes a good life, and why do we suffer? Does God exist? When it comes to knowledge and opinion, how do we know what, and whom, to believe? With what right do we judge our own actions and those of others? What is a 'just' society? Are we making progress as a society or as a species?

Students will be encouraged to think through their own responses to these questions with the aid of the philosophers and thinkers encountered in the course, including (but not limited to) Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Daniel Dennett, Elizabeth Anscombe, William James, Hannah Arendt, and Aldo Leopold.

Course Objectives:

This course has three aims or objectives:

1. To introduce students to key questions, figures and problems of Western philosophy, including different schools of philosophical thought;
2. To help develop students' critical and analytical skills, especially in reading and writing philosophy, and examining, critiquing, or defending their most cherished beliefs;
3. To provide students with the philosophical tools they need to grapple with outstanding contemporary problems, especially as these are contested through the lens of the Western intellectual tradition and with the advent of 'modernity'.

Requirements:

Deliverable	Course Weight	Due Date
2 short expository papers (500 words each)	2 x 7.5% = 15%	October 25 th , 2025, February 13 th , 2026
Midterm Examination	20%	December 1 st , 2025
Research Paper Proposal (250 words)	5%	March 6 th , 2026
Research Paper (1750 words)	20%	April 9th, 2026
Final Exam	30%	During April Exam Period; Date to be announced
Participation, including in-class surveys (see note below)	10%	Ongoing

NOTE: All assignments are due in the OWL Dropbox at 11:59 PM on the due date indicated. Late assignments are penalized 5% a day of the assignment's value per departmental policy. All written assignments will be turned in to TURNITIN at the instructor's discretion. Please consult the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) for more information.

Note Regarding Surveys

Surveys will be written periodically throughout both terms. 5 minutes of class time will be allocated to responding to polls given during class. There are no 'right answers' for student responses, however, the surveys will be graded for completion. Survey scores will be tallied at the end of the second term to calculate a grade worth 10% of the course grade. If the course moves online then surveys will be completed remotely via email within a 1-week period.

Method:

We will proceed with a lecture-discussion format. Students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in class discussion. It is expected that students complete the reading assignments indicated below to the best of their ability, to participate fully in class discussion.

Texts:

All required texts for the course are available online through the links provided on this syllabus, or through the course OWL website, at no additional cost to students. There are no required textbooks for this course.

Syllabus:

*Please note that the reading schedule provided below is preliminary and may be subject to revision with advance notice. **Only those sections of the texts indicated by page numbers or chapter headings noted are required reading.** Wherever possible, PDFs of the readings indicated below will also be posted on the course website.*

Unit 1: What is doing good? Classic Conceptions

September 8th through 10th: Introduction and explanation of course requirements; What is philosophy? How to think about ethics and values: general considerations (no readings this week)

September 15th through September 17th: Is doing good a matter of maximizing pleasure or wellbeing? Or is it a matter of following the moral law? Utilitarianism vs. deontology. Excerpts from Mill: *Utilitarianism: What Utilitarianism Is*: p. 1-18. Reading Available at

- <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/mill1863.pdf>;

Excerpts from Kant: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: p. 1-40. Available at:

- <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf>

September 22nd through 24th: Doing good is cultivating habits that lead to flourishing: Virtue Ethics. Excerpts from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Books I, II, and III*. Available at:

- <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

Unit 2: What is a 'self'?

September 29th through October 1st: The self as mind: The Cartesian Meditations. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: Meditations I and II*. Reading available at:

- https://yale.learningu.org/download/041e9642-df02-4eed-a895-70e472df2ca4/H2665_Descartes%27%20Meditations.pdf

October 6th through 8th: The self as illusion: Excerpts from Hume: *A Treatise of Human Nature*: Book 1: Of the Understanding. Reading available at:

- <http://web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/web%20publishing/Treatisel.iv.vi.htm>

October 15th through 20th (no class on the 13th): The 'self' as a programmed biological machine: Excerpts from Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity: A Technology of Behaviour*, pgs. 1-30. Available at

- https://archive.org/details/Beyond_Freedom_and_Dignity/page/n5/mode/2up

Unit 3: Does God Exist?

October 22nd through 27th: The ontological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God. Anselm of Bec, *Proslogion*, Read Preface, Chapters I, II, III, IV, V, XIV, XV. Available at:

- <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.html>
- Gaunilo's Response, *On Behalf of the Fool* and *Anselm's Apologetic*, chapters I, II, III, IV. Available at:
- <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-gaunilo.html>
- Excerpts from Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, available at
- <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/oakesm/PHIL101/Web1/readings/Aquinas.pdf>

Fall reading week November 3rd-9th

October 29th through November 10th: The argument from design. Excerpts from William Paley: *The Argument from Design*. Available at <https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil1020/Paley.pdf>

November 12th through 17th: The atheists respond. Bertrand Russell: *Why I am not a Christian*. Available at

- <https://users.drew.edu/~jlenz/whynot.html>.

Richard Dawkins: *Militant Atheism*. Watch/listen at

- https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_dawkins_militant_atheism

Unit 4: Why do we suffer? How can we find meaning and happiness?

November 19th through 26th: Classic conceptions of the good life: Socrates, Plato and the Stoics. The good life is the examined life: Plato's *Apology*. Available at

- <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

Wisdom and the value of love and friendship. Seneca of Rome: *Letters From a Stoic*, II-XIV. Available at

- https://hillelettersfromstoic.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/letters-from-a-stoic_lucius-annaeus-seneca.pdf

December 1st through 3rd: Do we need religion? William James: Excerpts from *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study In Human Nature*: Preface, I, IV and V. Available at:

- https://csrs.nd.edu/assets/59930/williams_1902.pdf

Unit 5: How should we live together? Conceptions of the well-ordered society

January 5th through 7th: Living together requires acknowledging our conflicting interests, and mitigating their effects: Excerpts from Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Chapters 13 and 14. Available at

- <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1.pdf>

Hume: There is no 'social contract'. Available at

- <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cofc.edu/dist/8/406/files/2014/09/David-Hume-Of-the-Original-Contract-1kif9ud.pdf>

January 12 through 14th: Rawls and the Veil of Ignorance: the case for liberal democracy. Excerpts from *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 1-19. Available at

- <https://philosophyintrocourse.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/rawls-theory-of-justice.pdf>

January 19th through 21st: The Spectre of Totalitarianism and the limits of liberalism. Isaiah Berlin: *Two Concepts of Liberty*. Available [here](#).

Hannah Arendt: Excerpts from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Chapter 13. Available at

- <https://archive.org/details/TheOriginsOfTotalitarianism/page/n17/mode/2up>

Unit 6: Is there an objective reality? Truth, Persuasion, and Bullshit

January 26th through 28th: Skepticism about moral objectivity and the pursuit of moral truth: Plato's *Gorgias*: 447a-481b (up to entrance of Callicles- introduction is optional). Available at

- https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Plato_s_Gorgias/qnYCAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PR3&printsec=frontcover

February 2nd through 4th: *Gorgias* (continued); Nietzsche: On *The Genealogy of Morals*, up to page 34: First Essay. Available at

- <https://philosophy.ucsc.edu/news-events/colloquia-conferences/GenealogyofMorals.pdf>

February 9th through 11th: The modern prevalence of bullshit. Harry Frankfurt: *On Bullshit*. Available at

- <https://www.math.mcgill.ca/rags/JAC/124/bs.html>

February 14 -22nd: Reading Week

February 23rd through 25th: In defence of objective reality: Daniel Dennett's *Real Patterns*. Available at

- https://rucss.rutgers.edu/images/personal-zenon-pylyshyn/class-info/FP2012/FP2012_readings/Dennett_RealPatterns.pdf

Unit 7: Are we making progress? The case for modernism, and the future of humanity

March 2nd through 4th: In defence of progress: Kant's *What is Enlightenment*. Available at

- <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>

Excerpts from Steven Pinker: *Enlightenment Now*. Available on course OWL website.

March 9th through 11th: The social cost of 'progress'. Elizabeth Anscombe: *Mr. Truman's Degree*. Available at:

- <http://www.ifac.univ-nantes.fr/IMG/pdf/Anscombe-truman.pdf>

Excerpts from Shoshanna Zuboff: *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. Available on the course OWL site.

March 16th through 18th: Future prospects and worries. Garrett Hardin: *The Tragedy of the Commons*. Available at

- <https://math.uchicago.edu/~shmuel/Modeling/Hardin,%20Tragedy%20of%20the%20Commons.pdf>

Matto Mildenburger: *The Tragedy of the Tragedy of the Commons*. Available at

- <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/the-tragedy-of-the-tragedy-of-the-commons/>

March 23rd through 25th: Aldo Leopold: The Land Ethic: Excerpts from *A Sand County Almanac*. Available on course OWL website.

April 1st through 8th: Synthesis and review of course concepts; Review and preparation for Final Exam.

Academic Integrity, Remote Proctoring

Scholastic offences are taken seriously. The definition of a Scholastic Offence can be found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Policy on generative AI:

Within this course, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are permitted exclusively for information-gathering and preliminary research purposes, such as development of an essay outline or suggesting secondary sources pulled from online. Please be aware that these tools tend to 'hallucinate' (i.e., make things up!), and be sure to vet any suggestions for content made by GPT and other AI text-generators. If AI tools are used, students must acknowledge use and state how the tool was used. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline.

Notice of Turnitin Analysis:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.