



Philosophy 1305G (570)
QUESTIONS OF THE DAY
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: G. Mouroutsou
Email: gmourout@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

This course develops students' ability to approach disputed questions by seeing them from both sides, so that they reach their own view only after respecting a broad range of argument. Six questions will be considered, including human (over) population, the public funding of art, and the limits of religious freedom.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50
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.

QUESTIONS OF THE DAY. We will *philosophically* debate such topics as the value of philosophy itself, the nature and value of friendship, the ethical life and utilitarianism, the nature of our emotions, different ways in which we can live the present moment, and are we just a brain and do we have a mind? Throughout the course, we will try not just to study philosophy, but to experience what it means to be philosophical and how it “pays off” in our everyday life.

Prerequisites: None.

Antirequisites: None.

General Information

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Georgia Mouroutsou, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy.

COURSE NATURE: Philosophy 1305G is a one-semester course.

MODE OF INSTRUCTION: In-person

OFFICE HOURS: My regular office hours will be after class. Stay in class please and we can discuss.

READINGS: The students are responsible for reading and bringing the required scanned texts (ca. 20 pages per session, sometimes shorter) to the class each time, which is provided on our OWL site. **NO textbooks.**

I. Requirements:

- Midterm Exam, **February 24: 20%**
- A Research Paper: i) abstract due **on March 10 (10%)** and (ii) the paper written **on March 17** in class: **30%**
- Final Exam scheduled by the registrar office: **40%**

The research paper will be worthy of 40% of the final grade (10% the abstract and 30% the paper in class March 17). The students are free to choose one debate to develop their paper or a topic of relevance to the topics we cover in class. The abstract is due on March 10: electronically.

Abstracts (300 words) must be submitted to the assignment box of Dr. Mouroutsou's OWL site **by March 10.**

In the abstract, you must use ***at least one bibliographical reference (this means quoted secondary literature) and at least one primary text.***

In the paper you write in class, it will NOT suffice that you quote a phrase from secondary literature. Instead, you must show active engagement with the work you refer to.

You can use Internet search engines like **jstor** to find relevant references. Moreover, the **Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy** is an excellent source. But in the paper, you must quote secondary literature (books or articles) and not internet sources.

I cannot accept undocumented absences/self-reports for the abstract/essay in class.

We will talk about essay-writing in class. (see schedule).

B. Mid-term Exam:

There will be a mid-term exam for the class **on Feb. 24**, which will be worth of **20%** of the grade.

III. Course Content and Objectives

- The objective of this class is to make the students understand what makes up and distinguishes **a *philosophical debate*** and to actively participate in philosophical discussions. They will thereby become acquainted **with both philosophical content (the thought and arguments in ancient and modern philosophy) and philosophical method.**
- It is equally important **to familiarize the students with philosophical terms of broader application** like hedonism, empiricism, materialism, cognitivism, determinism and compatibilism, but also motivate them **to take their own stand and shape their own views after considering different arguments and perspectives.**
- In all cases of philosophical texts we focus on, ancient or modern, we will learn how to **discuss the assigned texts thoughtfully and critically:** we will be **understanding the argument and its strengths**, on the one hand, and **criticizing the argument's weaknesses, on the other. For, in philosophical dialogue**, and while experiencing philosophy, we learn the importance of doing both.

- **To become philosophical in the above ways will positively affect and transform all aspects of our life**, in the short and the long run.

IV. Schedule WT (subject to small changes, if they are considered to be necessary):

Jan. 6: Intro (Syllabus; what does it mean to participate in a *philosophical* debate?)

Jan. 13: Are we in the Cave? (From Plato's *Republic*)

Background: Plato's philosophy as education: liberation from our (double) ignorance. The dangers of democracy.

Debate: Are we actually in a kind of cave nowadays, like the prisoners Plato describes in his famous allegory?

Jan. 20: Two competing models about friendship (Aristotle and the Stoics) Is friendship a moral good? Are friends irreplaceable or replaceable? Can we be friends with other citizens of the world that we do not even know?

Debate: Friendship in Common Activities or Cosmopolitanism?

Jan 27: On Essay Writing

Feb. 3: Hedonic Calculus I: How to measure pleasures (Epicurus)

What does it mean to be utilitarian? What does it mean to be an empiricist and an hedonist? Which is the basic problem that utilitarianism is confronted with?

Debate: Hedonic Calculus: Pros and Cons

Feb. 10: Hedonic Calculus II: Modern Hedonists (Bentham and Mill)

Debate: The Value of and the Problems with Utilitarianism

FEB. 17: STUDY WEEK, No class

FEB 24: Midterm (20%)

March 3: The Nature of Emotions and Cognitivism (Epictetus)

Are emotions "up to us"? Or, are we "delivered" to them?

Emotions as judgments: How can a cognitivist theory about emotions positively influence our everyday life and the therapy of mental struggles?

Debate: Are emotions thoughts?

March 10: The Nature of Emotions Continued

ABSTRACT due on OWL

Mar. 17: Paper Writing IN CLASS

Mar. 24: On how to live the present moment (Seneca)

Problem: How do we live the present moment? Should we focus on the present time, or not, and if so, then how?

Mar 31: Review!

April 7: no class due to conference

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.

Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

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](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.