



Philosophy 2206X (570)
MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: S. Lofts
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

A survey of the great philosophers from the Renaissance, through Modern philosophy to contemporary Post-modern thought, focusing on the systematic unity of their thought, the influence of their ideas and their importance for us today. Themes include: the nature of reality, human existence, truth, God, political agency, and ethics.

Antirequisite(s): Philosophy 2202F/G.

Prerequisite(s): Philosophy 2205W/X or registration in a Social and Political Thought module.

Extra Information: 6 lecture 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
University of Western Ontario
Department of Philosophy
PHIL2206X—Modern and Contemporary Philosophy

Instructor: Dr. Stephen Lofts
Mode of Instruction: In-person
Email: slofts@uwo.ca
Office Hours: by appointment
Prerequisites: Philosophy 2205W/X or registration in a Social and Political Thought module
Antirequisites: PHIL 2202 F/G

DESCRIPTION

This course covers the development of Modern philosophy, the critique of modern philosophy by contemporary thinkers, and efforts to go beyond it. The central theme is “the historical ontological grounding of the historical world and the problem of post-Kantian theology,” which will be clarified in the course’s Introduction. We begin with a brief overview of the history of philosophy, from the pre-Socratics to modern philosophy, emphasizing key concepts that form the main threads of Western ontological traditions. The rest of the course is divided into six units. In Unit #1, we explore the core principles of Cartesian philosophy, the evolution of modern philosophy, and its main challenges. In Unit #2, we briefly examine Kant’s project of transcendental philosophy, his critique of pure reason and special metaphysics, and the issues faced by his philosophical approach. Unit #3 discusses Hegel’s response to Kant and the nature of his Absolute Idealism. In Unit #4, we briefly look at Nietzsche’s view of nihilism and his efforts to overcome it. In Unit #5, we turn to Heidegger’s existential analysis of our being-in-the-world as a response to the ontological crisis at the start of the 20th century. Finally, in Unit #6, we conclude by studying Nishitani and the links between Buddhism, art, and the experience of eternity.

The course has three main objectives:

1. To familiarize students with the central questions, ideas, and influential figures in modern and contemporary philosophy.
2. To cultivate strong and critical reasoning skills when analyzing philosophical arguments and positions.
3. To help develop students’ philosophical positions and questions by responding to the philosophers’ views discussed.

Required Texts and Cost:

- All the readings will be posted on the course website.
- There is no cost for the course reading materials.

Course Requirements and Due Dates:

- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Final Exam: 40%
- Term Paper: 30%

Term Paper: (30%) – Due Thursday, April 6: submitted through OWL in Word Format.

- Your paper **MUST** be on Nishitani's "Buddhism and Eternity"!
- (2000 to 2500) – no more! no less! (double-spaced, 10-point, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins)
- **NO** Internet sources—you can use Internet search engines like Jstor or PhilPapers
- 10% of the grade will be based on formal elements: spelling, grammar, footnotes, bibliographical references, page numbers, student name, and student number.
- 10% of the grade will depend on the effective use of secondary sources: you must include at least three secondary works that are effectively incorporated into your paper. You **MUST** integrate quotations from secondary literature and include the bibliographical references. Quotations will be randomly checked, and if the quotation does not match the page referenced, the paper will be penalized 5% of the overall grade for each inaccurate reference.
- Demonstrate working with primary text/s

Extensions for Textual Commentaries: There are **NO** extensions for the textual summaries. Only extensions the ADO recommends for serious and long-term health issues will be approved. You have 5 days to complete an assignment that should only take 2 days. Please do not even ask.

Delivery Method of Course:

The course is divided into six units. They are as follows:

- Unit One: Descartes and Modern Philosophy
- Unit Two: Kant's Transcendental Philosophy and the Critique of Pure Reason
- Unit Three: Hegel and the Logic of History
- Unit Four: Nietzsche: The nature of the advent of Nihilism
- Unit Five: Heidegger: Finite temporality and Being-in-the-World
- Unit Six: Nishitani's account of art, Buddhism, and touching the infinite.

SYLLABUS

Tuesday: January 6 — Introduction

Thursday: January 8 — Historical contact of Modern Philosophy

Tuesday: January 13 — Historical contact of Modern Philosophy

Thursday: January 15 — Descartes

Tuesday: January 20 — Descartes

Thursday: January 22 — Empiricism → Hume

Tuesday: January 27 — Spinoza

Thursday: January 29 — Spinoza

Tuesday: February 3 — Leibniz

Thursday: February 5 — Leibniz

Tuesday: February 10 — review

Thursday: February 12 — Mid-Term Exam

Tuesday: February 17 — — no classes Reading Week

Thursday: February 19 — — no classes Reading Week

Tuesday: February 24 — Kant

Thursday: February 26 — Kant
Tuesday: March 3 — Kant
Thursday: March 5 — Hegel
Tuesday: March 10 — Hegel
Thursday: March 12 — Hegel
Tuesday: March 17 — Nietzsche
Thursday: March 19 — Heidegger
Tuesday: March 24 — Heidegger
Thursday: March 26 — Heidegger
Tuesday: March 31 — Heidegger
Thursday: April 2 — Nishitani
Tuesday: April 7 — Nishitani
Thursday: April 9 — Nishitani

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.