



PHILOSOPHY 1360E (670)
The Great Human Questions We All Ask
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: A. Calcagno
Email: acalcagn@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description: An introduction to the great human questions we all ask: Who are we? Why are we? How can we live a good life? Why do we suffer, die, encounter evil? What are sex, love, and friendship? What can we know? What ought we to do? What may we hope for?

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s):

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 1360E (670)—Great Human Questions We All Ask
2026-2027

Instructor: Antonio Calcagno, Ph.D., FRSC

Contact Information:

acalcagn@uwo.ca (EMAIL IS BEST MEANS OF CONTACT)

Office Hours:

Office hours posted of the class Brightspace class site.

PREREQUISITES: None

ANTIREQUISITES: None

DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to the fundamental questions of philosophy by examining the responses and arguments of great philosophers. The questions to be studied are meaningful and important, and they help us to better understand ourselves and shape our lives. Such questions include: What is a self? What is the nature of love, sex and friendship? Why do we suffer and what can we do about suffering? Does God exist? How do we know what is true and false? Why do we do the things we do? Why and how do we live in the social-political world we do? Students will be encouraged to think through their own responses to these questions with the aid of the philosophers encountered in the course, including Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Simone de Beauvoir, Cornel West, Angela Davis and Hannah Arendt.

This course has three aims or objectives:

1. To introduce students to key questions, figures and responses of philosophy;
2. To help develop students' critical and analytical skills, especially in reading and writing arguments;
3. To give students a philosophical framework whereby they can develop their own responses to the questions that help form our humanity.

REQUIREMENTS:

2 small reading assignments (3-5 pages) (2 X 10 = 20%) [**Due September 30, 2026 and October 28, 2026**]

1 midterm examination (20%) [**November 25, 2026—online with ProctorTrack**]

1 large research paper (8-10 pages) (20%) [**Due March 31, 2027**]

1 final exam (35%) (Date to be announced by Registrar)

Discussion and reflection exercises (1 x 10%=10%)

MODE OF INSTRUCTION:

This is an asynchronous online course. The course will consist of recorded lectures, reading and discussion exercises, as well as written assignments, tests and exams. Please consult the Brightspace class site for complete instructions.

COURSE MATERIALS and TEXTS:

Students will find all readings for the course on the class Brightspace site, including those that are hyperlinked on the syllabus. Also, some course materials will consist of recorded public lectures by specific philosophers. Links are provided on the syllabus.

SYLLABUS:

FIRST TERM:

September 9: Introduction and explanation of course requirements; what is philosophy and why does it matter?

FIRST QUESTION: What /Who are we? Is the human “obsolete”?

Transhumanism and overcoming human limitations:

Natasha Vita-More “Transhumanist Manifesto” and Susan B. Levin’s “The Irrationality of Transhumanists”

September 16: The Self as an “I” or ego: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, READ *Meditations I* and *II*

http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/cartes1641_1.pdf

September 23: Freedom to become whomever one decides to be: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

September 30: The importance of race, gender, and class for who we are:

Excerpts from Cornel West's *Race Matters*, pp. viii–20

Excerpts from Angela Y. Davis' *Women, Race and Class*

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/davis-angela/housework.htm>

[First reading assignment due]

October 7: SECOND QUESTION: Love, Sex and Friendship

Digisexuality and Sexbots: “The Rise of Digisexuality: Therapeutic Challenges and Possibilities” by Neil McArthur and Markie L. C. Twist

and

Neil McArthur’s “The Case of Sexbots”

October 14: Fall Reading Break—No class

October 21: Unconscious repression and sex: Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, Parts II (pp. 10-30) and IV (pp. 39-76)

October 28: On Illusion and the Intense Union of Love

Akka Mahadevi *Songs of Shiva*: Read vacanas 3–11, 154, and 170

[Second reading assignment due]

November 4: Sex and Power

Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/firestone-shulamith/dialectic-sex.htm>

Michel Foucault:

The History of Sexuality, volume 1, pp. 1–35.

November 11: THIRD QUESTION: Does God exist?

Anselm of Bec, *Proslogion*, Read Preface, Chapters I, II, III, IV, V, XIV, XV

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-proslogium.html>

Gaunilo's Response, *On Behalf of the Fool*

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-gaunilo.html>

Anselm's Apologetic, Read chapters I, II, III, IV

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-gaunilo.html> -
[ANSELM'S%20APOLOGETIC](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-gaunilo.html)

November 18: A case for atheism: Richard Dawkins

WATCH/LISTEN:

https://www.ted.com/talks/richard_dawkins_militant_atheism/transcript?language=ug

WATCH/LISTEN:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBbBenCTTwE>

November 25: MIDTERM EXAMINATION [Online—ProctorTrack will be used for this examination]

December 2: Thomas Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God

SECOND TERM

6 January: FOURTH QUESTION: Why do we suffer and what to do about suffering?

Stoicism: Do not try to change that which you cannot change

Epictetus' *Handbook (the Encheiridion)*

13 January: Contemporary Anxiety, Meaninglessness and Indifference:

Viktor Frankl, excerpts from *Man's Search for Meaning*, read Part Two: Logotherapy in a Nutshell

20 January: FIFTH QUESTION: Why should we know things and why does truth matter?

Harry Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* and *On Truth* (pp. 1–15)

27 January: SIXTH QUESTION: Ethics: Why do we do the thing we do?

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V: We ought to do things because we respect the law and demands of justice

<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.5.v.html>

3 February: We do things because they are rational and reasonable

Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, chapter 1–3

10 February: Our acts are determined by free decisions we undertake

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Parts I and II

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/index.htm>

17 February: READING WEEK (No class)

24 February: The relation between the weaker and the stronger (and vice versa) determines the ethical

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay

3 March: SEVENTH QUESTION: The nature of the social and political world: What kind of social and political words do we want?

Politics of Property and Individualism: John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*, read pp. 1-26

<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf>

10 March: Politics of Liberation and Desire: Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and the *Communist Manifesto* and excerpts from Rosa Luxemburg

Estranged Labour:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

Class Struggle: Read pp. 14–28: *Communist Manifesto*

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf>

Marxist Theory and the Proletariat:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1903/03/14-abs.htm>

17 March: Politics as power

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters I-XIII

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>

24 March: Rethinking natural law:

Read Val Napoleon's "What is Indigenous Law: A Small Discussion"

and

Val Napoleon's "Thinking about Indigenous Legal Orders"

31 March: Human action and the banality of evil: Hannah Arendt's essay "Thinking and Moral Considerations"

RESEARCH ESSAY DUE

7 April: REVIEW and PREPARATION FOR FINAL EXAM

Statement on AI Tools:

King's is committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and creativity. Thus, 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.

Within this course, use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools [such as Chat GPT] is not permitted for written work submitted for evaluation.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.