

Phil 11

**Introduction to
Philosophy**

**Summer
2024**

Instructor: Carolina Flores (she/they); caro.flores@ucsc.edu

Office Hours: Generally Fridays 9-10am on Zoom (full schedule and sign-up sheet [here](#)). Other times by appointment (email me).

TA team

Vivian Dong (she/her)	Nicholas Garcia (he/him)	Matthew Marzec (he/him)
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Required Texts: All readings, handouts, assignments, and announcements will be posted on Canvas.

Course Description

This class will introduce you to a wide range of philosophical problems. We will typically take contemporary, real-world issues as our starting point; as it happens, such issues often lead to traditional philosophical problems. Questions we will consider include: Am I the same person I was last year? What do our social identities—our genders, ethnicities, and so on—mean? Are we living in a computer simulation? When is work meaningful? Should we be giving all our money away?

Through thinking about these problems, you will develop a number of skills that matter in philosophy and elsewhere: reading and critically engaging with difficult texts; challenging basic assumptions; analyzing concepts, drawing distinctions, and forming and assessing arguments. The class is reading and writing intensive. Even though most of the readings and writing assignments are short, you will be called upon to practice extremely careful and precise reading and writing.

This class is asynchronous, which means that there are no (online or in-person) classes. All the work for the class is to be done in your own time.

Course Goals

In this class, you will learn to:

- Read and critically engage with difficult texts
- Charitably reconstruct and assess arguments
- Construct clear and persuasive arguments
- Challenge your basic assumptions, beliefs, and values
- Develop and respond to objections to philosophical views
- Analyze concepts and draw helpful distinctions
- Apply philosophical tools to contemporary problems
- Effectively and concisely communicate complex ideas in writing

You will also acquire some basic concepts in philosophy and become familiar with the main sub-fields of philosophy. I hope, also, that you acquire a taste for philosophical questioning, feel compelled by the questions we discuss, and choose to take further philosophy classes. :)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Readings in italics are guides to different key philosophical skills. Reading these is crucial to doing well in this class.

Week	Topic	Readings/Videos/Podcasts
Module 0. Introduction to the Course		
June 24–28	What is philosophy and how do I do it?	Syllabus Jennifer Morton, An Antidote to injustice <i>Wi-Phi, Introduction to Critical Thinking video</i>
Module 1. Who Am I?		
July 1–5	Am I the same person I was last year?	Daniel Dennett, Where am I? Susan Brison, Outliving oneself: Trauma, memory, and personal identity <i>Guide to reading philosophy</i>
July 8–12	What do my social identities mean?	Ian Hacking, Making up people Robin Dembroff, Why be non-binary <i>Guide to argument reconstruction</i>
Module 2. How do I know anything in the first place?		
July 15–19	Do I have access to the world out there?	Nick Bostrom, Are we living in a computer simulation? Thi Nguyen, Escape the echo chamber <i>Guide to constructing objections</i>
July 22–26	What is bullshit and how do I avoid it?	Harry Frankfurt, On bullshit Zeynep Tufekci, It's the (democracy-poisoning) golden age of free speech <i>Khan Academy lesson on necessary and sufficient conditions</i>
Module 3. Why am I here anyway?		
July 29–Aug 2	Does life have any meaning?	Albert Camus, The myth of Sisyphus Robert Nozick, The experience machine AUGUST 2: MIDTERM DUE.
August 5–9	Is all work just drudgery?	David Graeber, On the phenomenon of bullshit jobs Andrea Veltman, What makes work meaningful? <i>Guide to writing an outline</i>
Module 4. What should we do?		
August 12–16	Should I be angry? When?	Martha Nussbaum, Beyond anger bell hooks, Killing rage Agnes Callard, The philosophy of anger AUGUST 16: OUTLINE DUE
August 19–23	Should I give all my money away?	Peter Singer, Famine, affluence, and morality Larissa MacFarquhar, <i>Strangers Drowning</i> , chapters 3 and 4 Jim Pryor, <i>Guidelines on writing a philosophy paper</i>
August 26–30	Should we burn it all down?	Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham jail Malcolm X, The ballot or the bullet <i>Guide to philosophy sub-fields and what classes to take next.</i> AUGUST 30: FINAL PAPER DUE

Course Requirements

The course grade **depends heavily on your weekly work**, which is worth **54 points** total (i.e., the majority of your grade). The final and midterm together are worth the remaining 46 points.

Weekly work	54%
18 Hypothesis reading annotations	9% (0.5% per reading)
	9% (0.5% per video quiz)
18 video quizzes	
9 short writing assignments (200-400 words)	36% (4% per assignment)
Big assignments	46%
Midterm short paper	16%
Final paper outline	5%
Final paper	25%
Extra credit: for completing all assignments, or for attending office hours (with 2 substantive questions about the material sent in advance)	1%

Weekly Workflow

After the first week, when everything will be due on Friday, here is the weekly structure of the class:

Tuesday	Friday
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You receive the grade for the previous short writing assignment. Deadline (at midnight) to annotate the reading using Hypothesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline (at midnight) to submit (1) the video quiz, and (2) the weekly short writing assignment. Instructor posts (1) announcement introducing the next topic and (2) annotations on Hypothesis for the following week. Recommended: make a plan for when you will do the weekly tasks the following week.
<p>During the week: I expect you to spend about 4-6 hours a week on the class (with additional work for the midterm and final):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ 2 - 4 hours on active reading, ~ 30 minutes on the video quizzes, ~ 1 hour on the short writing assignment, and ~ 30 minutes on additional tasks (such as organizing your weekly work, reflecting on feedback, or asking further questions during office hours or in the Q&A forum). 	

Remember that **we have no in-person class meetings**.

Rubrics and instructions for assignments

Weekly work

These assignments will be available every week, but you only need to complete (approximately) 9 weeks for full credit. Specifically, you need to complete 9 short writing assignments, 18 reading annotations, and 18 video quizzes. Use this wisely: I recommend aiming to do all assignments, and using this as leeway for when life happens. If complete all the assignments, your best scores will count toward your final grade and you will get 1 point of extra credit.

- **Reading (9 points available, 0.5. per article):** I expect you to annotate the texts using Hypothesis, a program for collective study. This lets you view others' annotations, upvote your favorites, and comment on others' annotations.
 - These annotations are graded on a **Pass-Fail basis**. For a pass (full points), you should write **at least 2 annotations**, and at least **one of these should be in the second half of the text**. Each annotation should be a **sentence that shows some thinking** (i.e., not just 'Great!' or 'I disagree!'). These are due on Tuesday.
- **Video quizzes (9 points available, 0.5 per quiz):** Each week, the instructor will post 2 short videos (5-10 minutes each) about the main themes in the reading. They will include 2-4 embedded True-False or Multiple Choice questions. Answers are to be automatically graded for correctness. Each quiz is worth 0.5 points in total. These are due on Friday.
- **Short writing assignments (36 points available, 4 per assignment):** Each week, the instructor will post a short writing assignment (these must be between 200 and 400 words, around 1 page double-spaced). These are due on Friday. The format will vary: you might be asked to reconstruct an argument, object to a point in the reading, apply the material discussed in a real-world setting, put forward your own view, and so on. These will be graded based on the rubric below.
 - **4 points:** fully addresses all parts of the prompt. Concise, clearly written, and specific. Shows engagement with at least one of the texts for the week.
 - **3 points:** addresses the full prompt and is mostly relevant to the topic, but some points may be poorly or insufficiently articulated, or may not show engagement with any of the texts for the week. Or: is at the level of a 4, but over the 400-word word limit.
 - **2 points:** addresses at most half the prompt well (at 4-point level); or addresses the full prompt, but it is unclear, fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.
 - **1 point:** addresses at most half the prompt and it is unclear, fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.
 - **0 points:** unintelligible and unrelated.

Midterm and Final

Papers (and outlines) should be submitted with **no identifying information** (i.e. your name should be nowhere in the PDF) through Canvas by the due date (midnight of the day listed). Below is roughly what each letter grade means. Note that '+' grades will be assigned for fine-tuning.

A: Fully answers the question in a concise and convincing manner. Provides a strong argument, with a clearly stated, relevant thesis, a transparent argument structure, and compelling premises. Considers objections and makes a persuasive effort to address them. Writes clearly, in plain language, and uses

terminology in a precise manner. Shows insight by going beyond examples, views, or objections discussed in class.

B: Answers most of the question. Provides a solid argument, with a clear thesis, mostly transparent argument structure, and relevant premises, though the argument may have some significant gaps. Displays understanding of the topic by considering other views, though perhaps without articulating points independently or while showing confusion about some significant point. Writes mostly in a clear manner, though there might be inaccuracies that compromise the points made.

C: More-or-less off-topic and unclear. Fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.

D and below: scarce evidence of effort or understanding along all dimensions.

F: dishonest work.

Lateness policy

If handed in late, assignments will automatically be downgraded 10% per day. After 10 days, no late assignments are allowed. Note that **you can miss one full week of weekly assignments** (that's why you only need to hand in 9 weekly writing assignments instead of 10, etc.). I recommend that you save this leeway for potential emergencies/illness/mental health days.

For the midterm and final papers, you can request penalty-free extensions. These must be granted **at least 4 days before the due date, by emailing your TA**. If handed in late without discussing this with your TA first, late papers will be docked 10% per day. Until late assignments are graded, you will see a "0" on Canvas, as I've set it to auto-populate a score of 0 into every missing assignment once the due date has passed. Late assignments will be graded when we have time, within 2 weeks of submission; your grade will change then.

If you have a serious, unavoidable emergency (e.g., the death of a close family member, serious illness, etc.), email me and we will figure out an accommodation.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

I expect you to be familiar with and to abide by the [university's academic misconduct policy](#). Violations of this policy include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

In general, anything more than 3 consecutive words from another source should include a citation to that source. If you submit work that appears to have been written using unauthorized sources, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your thinking and writing process. I will also ask you to talk through your submission orally so I can assess your knowledge in real time. If, after our conversation, I conclude it's more likely than not that you did not personally complete an assignment you submitted under your name, you will get a 0 on the assignment, I may give you a failing grade for the entire course, and I will definitely report the incident to the university administration for further sanctions.

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools

TL;DR: Unless you are specifically instructed to use AI in an assignment prompt, using generative AI for ANY task related to this course is not allowed.

Full version: Philosophy is all about critical thinking and skillful writing, both of which can only be developed through concerted effort over time. You're here to learn those skills, and using AI will keep you from doing that.

The easiest way to ensure that your writing does not come under suspicion for AI use is to not use AI. Here is the AI policy for my classes:

- You may not use ChatGPT or any other generative AI platform or technology, including (but not limited to) Bing, Bard, DALL-E, Grammarly Premium, StudyBuddy, predictive text, etc.
- Unless *explicitly* instructed to do so for a specific assignment, you may not use AI for any reason, including (but not limited to) thinking, writing, brainstorming, researching, outlining, editing, or literally any other purpose on the planet that you could conceive of.
- Translation software (including, but not limited to, Google Translate) counts as an AI platform, so its use is strictly prohibited. Even if English is not your first language, you must write your papers directly in English rather than writing them in your native language and translating them. You may look up individual words in an English/Your-Native-Language online dictionary, but you may not use an online translator to translate phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or papers.
- I expect you to be able to easily define any word you use in your writing; please be sure to learn and memorize the definitions of any new words you have gotten from a dictionary.
- For spell-check and grammar-check functions, you are limited to Grammarly Basic (*not* Premium) or the basic spell-check and grammar-check features that come pre-loaded with word-processing software such as MS Word or Google Docs. You may not use any other editing software, nor should you use the suggestive/predictive text that such software proposes.

If you have any questions about this policy, please ask me so I can provide clarification.

Other Expectations

I expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions, and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way.

Communication and “in-person” contact

Before emailing, check the syllabus to see if your question is addressed. Do not email about handing in assignments late; just hand them in and they will be graded with the corresponding penalty. (Do email if you have a serious emergency and will need accommodations.)

For any questions about the course logistics or grades, you should **always e-mail the TA for your section first**. If needed, they will forward the e-mail to the instructor or consult with them before

replying. You should get a reply to your emails within 48 hours, excluding weekends. If this is a question multiple people are likely to have, the response may come in the form of an Announcement on Canvas.

Office hours: Sign up for a 15-minute office hour appointment [here](#). If you can't make that time but would like to meet, it's no problem; just email me and we will schedule a meeting. To receive extra credit for attendance, you must e-mail me 2 substantive questions you would like to discuss in advance.

Examples of substantive questions are: "I didn't understand this argument /concept in the reading. Can you explain?"; "What are the applications of view X for real-world issue Y?"; "Here is my objection to the view in paper X."; or questions about your own work, e.g. "How can I improve the structure of my papers?", or "How can I improve my time management?"

Q&A forum: There will be a Q&A forum on Canvas, where you are welcome to post questions or observations about the course material and to respond to others' questions.

Tutoring

There is tutoring available for this class, provided by [Learning Support Services \(LSS\)](#). [Tutoring](#) is for everyone and open to all students in class to get extra practice on the things you already know or the things you want to know better.

Your tutor Nitya Jain (she/they) njain14@ucsc.edu is an undergraduate student who took the class, did well, and received extensive training on how to help you learn. Sessions are one-hour long, available several days a week and attendance is voluntary.

Why attend? Easy, students who attend sessions weekly tend to earn a higher final grade than students who do not participate. Ask your tutor for more information about session times, visit the LSS [website](#), or visit [in person at the ARCenter](#). You can also view your Tutor's schedule and sign up on [Tutor Hub](#).

Accommodations

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your [Academic Access Letter](#) from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, as soon as possible in the academic quarter, preferably within 1 week. I also encourage you to discuss with me ways we can ensure your full participation in this course. I encourage all students who may benefit to learn about the DRC and the UCSC accommodation process. You can visit the DRC website at drc.ucsc.edu. You can make an appointment and meet in-person with a DRC staff member. The phone number is [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089), or email drc@ucsc.edu.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.