

Modern Philosophy: PHIL 3103

Spring 2017

Syllabus

Time & Location:

Tuesdays & Thursdays
12:05-1:25 PM
CULC 129

Instructor:

Dr. Ruth Poproski
CULC 457
ruth.poproski@gatech.edu

Course Website:

<https://t-square.gatech.edu/>

Office Hours:

Thursdays, 3-5 PM
(or by appointment)*

* Announcements for changes to office hours will be posted in the T-Square announcements section and communicated via text (see Course Policies below); to make an appointment first see my free-busy calendar at bit.ly/ruthscalendar.

Course Description:

During the 16th & 17th centuries, as the Scientific Revolution took root in the West, new questions arose about the origin and nature of knowledge, the nature of existence, and best ways to organize society. In this course we will study how thinkers of this “Modern Era” approached these questions, while simultaneously attempting to trace connections to our current lived experience. Philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Hume will be our teachers, as we seek to untangle how in the world we know anything at all. And perhaps also how we know that we know anything at all...

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this semester you should be able to:

- articulate and critique the positions held by our selection of modern era philosophers, on the key issues they discuss;
- assess the contributions of modern era thought to a variety of trends in contemporary practice and thought;
- apply insights from modern era discussions to contemporary debates and phenomena;
- formulate (at least a sketch of) your own theories of knowledge and existence.

Grading Criteria:

Item	Portion of Grade	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	20%	N/A
Rdg & Reflection Assignments	30%	Beginning of each class (ongoing)
Paper	20%	Thursday, Feb. 9 th , 11:55 PM
Final Project Proposal	5%	Thursday, March 16 th , 11:55 PM
Final Project	25%	Tuesday, April 20 th , 12:05 PM

**All work should be submitted as a digital copy through T-Square, unless otherwise indicated when assignment details are distributed.

Assignment Details:

Attendance & Participation (20%):

Since in-class discussion is an important part of the learning experience in this course, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class on a regular basis. However, in order to accommodate your schedule and life, you are welcome to miss up to three classes during the semester. If you foresee the need to miss more than three classes during the semester, please discuss your conflicts with me by the end of the second week of classes, so that we can develop an alternative plan for your completion of the course requirements.

There is in general no need to provide me with documentation related to your absences from class. However, if you miss more than three classes during the semester and wish to have an exception made regarding your attendance and participation grade (e.g., you were ill or faced some other personal emergency), you will need to provide documentation for *all* of your absences, to show that each was in fact worthy of an exception.

Attendance will be taken during class, and you will earn points according to the following scale:

- 0 points** did not attend class, or missed 20+ minutes of class time & was disengaged (e.g. sleeping, reading, doing other work, etc.)
- 1 point** attended class but was disengaged, or missed 20+ minutes
- 2 points** attended class and showed signs of engagement (e.g. taking notes, participating in discussion, etc.)

At the end of the semester your Attendance & Participation grade will reflect your average points earned across all classes (allowing for three absences). You are welcome to ask about your Attendance & Participation grade at any point during the semester, and regardless, I will provide you with a mid-semester update on your progress to that point.

Reading & Reflection Assignments (30%):

These exercises are meant to assist you in your preparation for in-class discussion each day, to help you interpret and understand the reading you are doing, and to help you synthesize the overall narrative in the course. See the schedule at the end of this syllabus for more information, but in general, you will have some reading to do before class on Tuesdays, and a video or online source to engage with before class on Thursdays.

Reading assignments: For each assigned reading, a few short reading questions will be posted in T-Square, and answers to those questions will be due by the start of class.

Reflection assignments: For most reflection assignments you will be asked to watch a video and/or read an online source, and you will be asked to comment on what you think our current author would say in response to what you've seen, read, and/or heard.

In both cases you will earn grades based on clarity, sophistication of thought, and how well your answers reflect the fact that you have thoughtfully read and/or watched the assigned material. See the "resources" section of T-Square for a handout explaining your homework grading criteria in more detail.

Paper (20%):

For this 5-7 page paper you will be asked to discuss the importance of critical thinking, bringing in specific material read and discussed during the first several weeks in the course. You will earn grades based on the clarity and organization of your paper, the quality of your exposition and evaluation of primary sources, and your presentation of connections to contemporary phenomena. More details will be distributed in class and via T-Square.

Final Project (30%):

In your final assignment for this course, you may choose to write a 5-7 page final paper, or design an alternative form of assessment, according to your own interests, training, and strengths. In either case you will be required to submit a proposal for your project, worth 5% of your course grade. You will also be given the opportunity to submit a draft of your final project, if you would like feedback on it before final submission. The final submission for your final project is worth 25% of your course grade.

Final Grade: Your final grade will appear as a letter grade according to the following scale:

90-100%	A	70-79%	C	0-59%	F
80-89 %	B	60-69%	D		

Text & Readings:

Most readings are from our textbooks, available at the campus bookstore:

Ariew & Watkins (2009). *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. Hackett Publishing, 2nd Edition.

See the class schedule at the end of this syllabus for a schedule of required readings. Readings that are not from our textbook will be posted on T-Square.

Course Policies:

I, like many at Georgia Tech, believe it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between myself and my students. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22> for an articulation of some basic expectations that you can have of me, and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. In other words, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech, while in this class.

Our Communication Outside of Class

Announcements: In general, announcements related to this course will be posted on T-Square and communicated verbally in class. In cases where announcements are urgent or especially important, I will use T-Square to send you an e-mail. See also the note about *Remind*, below.

Email: You are welcome to contact me via email (ruth.poproski@gatech.edu). In general I will aim to reply to you within one business day, but often it will be much quicker than that. Note, however, that I generally attempt to keep my “work” day to M-F, 9 AM – 5 PM. Emails received outside of that time will often not be responded to until I return to my office the following weekday.

Office Hours: I have set aside time in my schedule each week to make sure you have the opportunity to discuss course-related items with me outside of class. If you plan to stop by, a quick message (via email or text) is appreciated, to help me manage my time effectively. Also, if you cannot come to my office hours, please look at my free-busy schedule (found at <http://bit.ly/ruthscalendar>) and message me with a suggested time to meet.

Remind: If you would also like to receive announcements and reminders via text message, and/or reach me via text with short/urgent questions, please text @phil310 to 81010. I am trying out an app called “Remind” that will allow me to send you messages via text message without the awkward requirement of sharing our personal contact information.

Your Presence in Class

Accommodations for Learning Needs: If you have learning needs that require some adaptations for you to succeed in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/> as soon as possible: the staff in that office are well-equipped to identify your particular needs for this class, and I am happy to arrange to accommodate your learning needs based on their recommendations. Please also feel free to discuss your needs with me after class, during my office hours, or via e-mail.

Attendance: Since in-class discussion is an important part of the learning experience in this course, you are expected to attend and actively participate in class on a regular basis. However, in order to accommodate your schedule and life, you are welcome to miss up to three classes during the semester. If you foresee the need to miss more than three classes during the semester, please discuss your conflicts with me by the end of the second week of classes, so that we can develop an alternative plan for your completion of the course requirements.

Class Discussion: You are encouraged to share personal experiences and opinions with respect to the topics covered in this class. However, please keep in mind that our purpose in this class is to think critically about the issues. In an environment of mutual respect we should be able to engage in well-rounded and constructive discussion that is beneficial to all of us.

Food: You are welcome to eat your lunch during class, but please clean up after yourself, and try to bring things that won't distract you or others from participation and engagement during class.

Mobile Devices: If you prefer to use a mobile device for taking notes, please discuss it with me first. Otherwise, please leave your cornucopia of mobile devices in your bag or at home, and turn your cell phone off. At times we will make use of a polling software called "Poll Everywhere". When we do this you are encouraged to pull out a web-ready device (e.g., smartphone) in order to engage with the questions being asked. However, please do your very best to set your device aside when we are not using Poll Everywhere, so that you can remain focused on the discussion and learning experience at hand. Following this policy will help all of us concentrate on the discussion at hand, and will prevent us from being sucked into the rabbit hole commonly known as the internet.

Your Academic Work

Academic Integrity: tl;dr Don't cheat, steal ideas, or copy stuff. And cite your sources.

Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behaviour in this course, I will follow Georgia Tech guidelines and report the incident to the Office of Student Integrity – after which an appropriate penalty will be assessed. For more information about your rights and responsibilities under Georgia Tech's Honour Code, please visit <http://osi.gatech.edu/>.

In this class you are welcome to discuss your ideas with others, and to make use of campus resources like the Center for Academic Success and the Communication Center to assist you in your pursuit of academic excellence. However, please note that your work should be your own: consider taking a half hour break after discussing ideas with others, in order to avoid simply regurgitating someone else's thoughts as if they belong to you.

If you have questions about my integration of the university's policy into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair.

Assignment Re-Grading: If you have a concern about a grade on an assignment, or would like more feedback than you have received, please return your graded assignment to me within two class periods, along with a written explanation of your question(s)/concern(s) – aiming to articulate your thoughts respectfully and as clearly as you can. I will take another look at your assignment, and will make every effort to respond within one week of receipt, to address your concerns.

Late Assignments: Your paper and final project (including your initial proposal) are due at 11:55 PM on their respective due dates. These items may be turned in after the deadline, but you will be eligible to earn fewer points once the deadline has passed: you will only be able to earn 95% of the total grade if it is submitted by 3 AM that night, and you will lose an additional 10% from the original total for every 12 hour period it is late thereafter (e.g., if you turn your paper in at 3:05 AM it will earn max 85% of the total available). Work that is more than 3 days late will earn a grade of 0.

Late reading and reflection assignments will not be accepted.

Note also that extensions will not generally be permitted, but if you think you are subject to an exceptional circumstance, please discuss it with me outside of class (and as soon as possible).

Use of Outside Resources: I recommend that you do *not* use outside resources for your work in this class. They are often poorly chosen, and they have a tendency to lead good students astray. Notably, Wikipedia tends to be a bad source for interpretation of philosophical thought. In addition, your papers and reading assignments will be graded (in part & to varying degrees) on the basis of *your* ability to develop *your* ideas, so I recommend focussing your efforts on that endeavour instead.

That said, please be sure to cite all outside sources that you use. If you really must, here are 3 good online resources for you to utilize if you find you need them:

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.rep.routledge.com/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

See next page for Course Schedule

PHIL 3103: Schedule of Classes & Readings

Except where otherwise indicated, all readings are from our course textbook. See T-Square for assignment prompts.

	Date	Topic & Items Due	Reading Schedule
T	10-Jan	Welcome & Introductions	
Part I: Scientific Reasoning & How We Think About the World			
Th	12-Jan	Barriers to the Discovery of Truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Francis Bacon, <i>New Organon I</i> (pp. 16-20)
T	17-Jan	A Method for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Rene Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> (pp. 25-35)
Th	19-Jan	Information Literacy and Fake News <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	24-Jan	Foundations for Our Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> - - Section IV (Part I) & Section VI (pp. 542-545 & 555-556)
Th	26-Jan	Causation & Medical Diagnosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due • Paper assignment discussed in class 	
T	31-Jan	Non-Empirical Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Immanuel Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> – Sections IV-VI (pp. 724-729)
Th	2-Feb	Topic TBA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
Part II: The Nature of Existing Things (and our interaction with them)			
T	7-Feb	What is stuff made of? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Galileo Galilei, <i>The Assayer</i> (pp. 21-24)
Th	9-Feb	What is the source of sensation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper due 	
T	14-Feb	Skepticism & Rationalism: Knowledge by Reason <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Rene Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> – Meditations One and Two (pp. 40-47)
Th	16-Feb	The Superiority (or lack thereof) of Humans to Animals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	21-Feb	Empiricism: Knowledge by Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	John Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> – Book I Chapter I & Book II Chapter II (pp. 316-318 & 322-328)

Th	23-Feb	Personal Identity: What makes a thing what that thing is? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	28-Feb	Alternate Universes and Necessary Truths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Gottfried Leibniz, <i>Discourse on Metaphysics</i> – Sections 1,3,30 (pp. 224, 225-226, 242-243)
Th	2-Mar	The Problem of Evil <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	7-Mar	Idealism: Our Ideas are the Source of Existing Things <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due • Final project assignment discussed in class 	Charles Berkeley, <i>Principles of Human Knowledge</i> – Part I (pp. 447-453)
Th	9-Mar	What, if anything, can we have knowledge about? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
Part III: Life with Other Humans			
T	14-Mar	Instructor Scheduling Conflict (no class)	
Th	16-Mar	A Machiavellian Way of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due • Final project proposal due 	Reading tba (will be posted on T-Square)
T	21-Mar	Spring Break (no class)	
Th	23-Mar	Spring Break (no class)	
T	28-Mar	The Social Contract: Agreeing to Live in Peace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> – Chapters 13 & 14 (1-9) (see T-Square for link to reading)
Th	30-Mar	Topic TBA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	4-Apr	What it Means to be Free <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due • Final project proposal due 	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> – Chapter 21 (see T-Square for link to reading)
Th	6-Apr	Our Responsibility to Non-Citizens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
T	11-Apr	Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> – Chapters 1-4 & 6 (see T-Square for link to reading)
Th	13-Apr	Property Rights and the State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading assignment due 	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> – Chapter 5 (see T-Square for link to reading)

T	18-Apr	Topic TBA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection assignment due 	
Th	20-Apr	Final Discussion & Wrap-Up; Final Project Expo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project due 	
T	25-Apr	Final Instructional Day (no class)	