

Philosophy 1350

Reality and What We Can Know of It

COURSE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Course: Philosophy 1350G

Semester: Winter 2009

Time: M 130 – 230; W 130 – 330

Place: HC W-12

Prerequisites: none*

Antirequisites: none*

(*See below the policy on prerequisites.)

Instructor: John Turri

Office: V122

Office hours: T 430 – 520; Th 1030 - 1100

Email: jturri@huron.uwo.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces you to perennial and influential philosophical puzzles, theories and arguments. Our meetings will rotate between lectures (with ample opportunity for questions) and tutorials. Topics may include: various puzzles and paradoxes, arguments for and against the existence of God, knowledge, skepticism, perception, personal identity, the mind/body problem, the nature of art, the nature of science, the nature of morality, the meaning of life, determinism and free will.

COURSE GOALS

There are five main goals of this course. The first three goals pertain to the specific content of the course; achieving them means that you have gained some valuable knowledge about an important area of human inquiry. The last two pertain to your development as a thinker more generally; achieving them means that you have exercised and strengthened valuable intellectual skills. By the end of this course you should:

1. Be familiar with a number of influential topics in core areas of philosophy.
2. Understand how philosophers have argued for and against views on these topics.
3. Cultivate a critical perspective on those arguments and views.
4. Cultivate the basic critical skills of recognizing and assessing arguments.
5. Avail yourself of the opportunity to improve at formulating and communicating sophisticated ideas and arguments.

REQUIRED TEXTS

N/A

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

1. Lewis Vaughn, *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays* (Oxford, 2006), ISBN: 0195179560
2. A. P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Blackwell, 2005), ISBN: 1405131675

3. Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* (Hackett, 2003), ISBN: 0872205738

EVALUATION

1. **Attendance & participation**: You **must** attend **all** assigned tutorials. I will take attendance. You must bring your notes from lecture and come prepared with at least two questions or criticisms to offer about the lecture material. For those who need prompting to participate, I will provide it.
2. **Midterm exam**: We will have one in-class essay exam on topics covered in lecture.
3. **Final exam**: We will have a comprehensive final essay exam during the final-exam period, as scheduled by the registrar (date TBD), on topics covered in lecture.

Breakdown: I will calculate your mark for the course as follows:

Attendance & participation: 15% (each tutorial is worth $15/n$, where n = the number assigned)

Midterm: 25%

Final: 60%

NOTE: You must complete all assignments (including exams) to pass the course.

SOME DATES TO REMEMBER

I'll lecture most Wednesdays (not listed below, but be sure to come!) and tutorials will meet most Mondays. I'll distribute tutorial-group assignments the first week of class. I won't have office hours on: T 1/13, T 1/27, T 2/17, Th 3/12, T 3/24. Contact me for alternative arrangements.

DATES	TOPIC
1/5	Course introduction
1/12	Tutorial – group 1
1/19	Tutorial – group 2
1/26	Tutorial – group 3
2/2	Tutorial – group 4
2/9	Tutorial – group 1
2/23	Tutorial – group 2
2/25	MIDTERM EXAM
3/2	Tutorial – group 3
3/9	Tutorial – group 4
3/11	NO CLASS

DATES	TOPIC
3/16	Tutorial – group 1
3/23	Tutorial – group 2
3/30	Tutorial – group 3
4/6	Tutorial – group 4
4/8	Review session
TBD	FINAL EXAM

GENERAL POLICIES

1. Attendance

You must attend all assigned tutorials. There is no assigned reading for this course. All course content will be delivered through lecture. Failure to attend class regularly, pay attention and take careful notes will *significantly* reduce your chances of performing well in the course. I *will not* recapitulate by email points made in lecture or class discussion. I will make important announcements in class, which absent students will miss (obviously); ignorance of such announcements *will not* excuse you from completing any course requirements on time.

2. Plagiarism

A student's assignments must be in his or her own words. Every time a student makes use of another person's words or ideas, the student must acknowledge his or her intellectual debt through the appropriate use of quotation marks and citations. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a major academic offense. Simply put, plagiarism is passing off another person's work as your own. Students are required to read the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism (<http://www.huronuc.ca/pdf/FASSonPlagiarism.pdf>). If you still have questions about plagiarism, consult your instructor, Department Chair, or Dean, and the style manuals available at the Reference Desk of the Huron University Library.

You may be required to submit any written work for analysis by commercial plagiarism-detection software. For example, I may require you to submit it to turnitin.com. (Alternatively, I may submit it myself, after you've turned it in.) All work thus submitted will be included as a source document in the reference database for detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted. A licensing agreement, currently between UWO and turnitin.com, governs use of this service. Computer-marked multiple-choice tests or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that detects unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

The **default penalty** for plagiarism is ***failure in the course***. The more advanced the course or student's standing, the more entrenched that default status becomes. It is virtually infeasible for more advanced students.

3. Scholastic Offenses

Read this: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

4. Academic accommodation

When you request academic accommodation on medical grounds, your request will be granted ONLY IF you provide documentation indicating that the condition's onset, duration and severity made it unreasonable to expect you to fulfill your academic responsibilities. When you request accommodation on non-emergency non-medical grounds, you are *strongly advised* to do so *well in advance* of the relevant date.

You will be allowed to make up an examination *only if* you missed it either because of medical reasons, because of compassionate grounds involving close family, or other substantial non-medical reasons. (In the special case of final examinations, examination conflicts also warrant accommodation.) In any case, you must provide written documentation. Documentary guidelines and instructions for document submission can be found here: http://www.huronuc.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_counselling/.

Huron students required to provide documentation must submit it directly to the Academic Services Center in the West Wing; non-Huron students must submit it directly to their home Dean. The appropriate authorities and I will then confer. I will try to accommodate you when scheduling a makeup exam, but you will ultimately be expected to re-take the exam at the time and place I indicate.

Late assignments *will not be accepted* unless circumstances are extraordinary and you provide an excuse acceptable to me. I will find an excuse acceptable only if you present it to me *privately during my office hours*. Do not discuss such matters with me in front of other students. I may at my discretion require you to provide documentation or refer you to the academic counselor. If I require you to provide documentation for a late assignment, then if you are a Huron student, you must submit it directly to the Academic Services Center in the West Wing; if you are a non-Huron student, you must submit it directly to your home Dean. The appropriate authorities and I will then confer.

The following excuses will not suffice for missing a deadline: 'I overslept', 'I have a lot of work due in other classes around this time', 'I didn't read that in the syllabus', 'I didn't think that was a strict requirement', 'I didn't hear that announcement in class', 'I didn't see that announcement on WebCT/OWL', etc. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive; many other excuses will similarly fail to suffice.

What I say here about 'late assignments' applies to *all deadlines* for the course, whether specifically tied to an assignment or not.

5. Grading review

Although rare, serious grading mistakes sometimes occur. If you wish to discuss a mark with me, you must first, within a week of receiving your mark, provide to me a detailed and specific written account of your concerns. I *will not* discuss marking disputes in person unless I have first read your written account and judged there to be a prima facie plausible case that something is amiss. Note well: upon review, your mark may be raised *or lowered* as the case merits. Barring special circumstances I will not review a mark later than two weeks after I *first* attempt to return the assignment (which implies, for example, that if you're continually absent when I attempt to hand back marked assignments, you will forfeit your opportunity to request a review).

When inquiring about a mark, remember that the following statements are irrelevant to an assignment's merits: 'I'm applying to competitive programs, and this mark will hurt my chances', 'A mark like this will prevent me from graduating with honors', 'I will not

graduate if I earn marks like this in the course', 'I am on academic probation, and marks like this will prevent me from continuing my studies here', 'I have never gotten a mark like this before', 'I showed you a draft of this and you did not tell me it would earn a mark like this', 'When you looked at a draft of this you did not make this criticism', etc. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive; many other considerations are similarly irrelevant. Some considerations may be irrelevant to an assignment's merits, though not absolutely irrelevant.

6. Usage

English usage will matter **greatly** in the evaluation of all written work. Grammatical mistakes will count heavily against an assignment. Grammar counts. Clarity counts. Spelling counts. Diction counts. Focused paragraphs count. Topic sentences count.

7. Communication

Students are required to check regularly their campus email accounts, as well as the WebCT/OWL site for this course. Important announcements about readings and assignments may be made via those media. Ignorance of such announcements will not excuse you from handing in any assignment on time. By far the best (and preferred) way to contact me is at the email address listed at the beginning of this syllabus. Do not leave me a voicemail, as I check my messages rarely and sporadically.

8. Email

I usually respond to email queries within a couple days. But remember: email is *emphatically not* a substitute for attending class. I have no obligation to respond to emails that ask questions along the following lines: 'What did I miss in class today?', 'I missed the lecture on X—could you tell me what that was about?', 'I've forgotten about Y—could you remind me of the details?', etc. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

A bit of advice: ungrammatical—which would include unpunctuated—emails tend to give a bad impression, even if they do not count towards your grade.

9. Office hours

I encourage you to visit during office hours. If you are puzzled by some material we have covered, it is best to come with a well-defined question already formulated. If you missed a class, visiting office hours is the appropriate way to catch up on missed material. NOTE: **DO NOT COME TO MY OFFICE WHILE YOU ARE ILL.** Doing so is worse than rude, and I will not take kindly to it.

10. Counseling and support services

Huron philosophy students needing counseling about their program of study or related matters should contact Dr. David Conter. For other academic matters relating to counseling, community-based learning, career development, writing services, cross-cultural services, or international opportunities, visit the Academic Services Center in Huron's West Wing. Also see http://www.huronuc.on.ca/faculty_arts_social_science/academic_counseling/.

11. Recording devices

Lectures may be recorded *only if* permission is given *in advance*. Lectures are intellectual property and unauthorized use of them constitutes theft.

12. Technological devices

Students may not use technological devices (e.g., laptops, PDAs, cell phones, etc.) in the classroom for *anything* not *directly* related to the content and purpose of current classroom discussion or activity. Using such devices for any other purpose disrupts and

distracts student and professor alike, and inhibits effective instruction and learning. No electronic devices are allowed during examinations, quizzes or like assessment.

13. Extra credit

There will be no extra credit assignments, so make your regular work count.

14. Internet sources

For all assigned work in this course, you may *not* cite *any* Internet resources, except for (a) those explicitly assigned, (b) those I explicitly grant special permission for *in advance* (a typical example might be a relevant journal article or book available electronically through the library), and (c) the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (Note that this excludes Wikipedia.)

15. Students with disabilities

Accommodations for students with disabilities are typically arranged through student services. But you should feel free to approach me with any concerns you might have.

16. Late adds

Students joining this course late are responsible for completing *all* the assigned work due prior to their joining. I will not track them down to ensure they complete the work: it is entirely their responsibility.

17. Official syllabus

The official course syllabus is distributed in hard copy on the first day of class and posted on the WebCT/OWL site for this course. Any syllabus posted elsewhere (including on Huron's philosophy department website or on my personal website) is *unofficial* and students *should not* rely on it. The official takes precedence over the unofficial in *all* cases (which is why you should rely on the official).

18. Prerequisites (and antirequisites)

Senate regulations state that you are responsible for ensuring that you meet all course prerequisites. (The same applies to so-called "antirequisites," which are really just prerequisites to have *not* taken certain courses.) If you have neither met all the prerequisites nor received special written permission from your Dean to enroll, then you may be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. In the event that you are dropped for this reason, then the decision may not be appealed, and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. No information about prerequisites (or antirequisites) contained in this syllabus is guaranteed to be accurate; you rely on it entirely at your own risk; check the academic calendar for the latest information.