

## Philosophy 100.1 & 100.2: Introduction to Philosophy (Fall 2017)

**Classes:** Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays

Section 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. in North Quad (NQ) 143

Section 2: 11:00–11:50 a.m. in North Quad (NQ) 292

**Professor:** Dr. Rachel Fredericks

I prefer it when my students call me Rachel, but you may call me Prof. or Dr. Fredericks, if you are more comfortable with that.

**Email Address:** [rlfredericks@bsu.edu](mailto:rlfredericks@bsu.edu)

I prefer to be contacted by email rather than telephone. I usually respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on the weekend.

### **Office Hours:**

M 12 – 1:00 pm; T & Th 12:15 – 1:15 pm; W 1 – 2:00 pm, & by appointment

Email me your availability if you want an appointment and can't attend my regularly scheduled office hours.

Office Location: North Quad (NQ) 230

Office Phone: 765 / 285 - 1261

Office hours are a time for us to chat one-on-one or in small groups; you can ask me questions about course material, discuss study strategies, or just have a conversation about what is on your mind. Whether you are struggling or want an extra challenge, office hours can be very helpful, so I recommend taking advantage of them!

### **Course Description**

Welcome to philosophy! As philosophers, we ask “WHY” questions about anything and everything you can imagine (especially “Why should I believe this?”). In fact, YOU, the students, will choose some of the topics / questions we study (in Weeks 12-15).

But we don't stop after just asking big questions - we aim to give good reasons for whatever answers we come up with. Doing that involves engaging with debates that have puzzled lots of people for a long time. Along the way, we practice new ways of thinking, reading, speaking, and writing. While our readings and discussions can get abstract, we should always try to consider how our conclusions impact our everyday lives *and the lives of others*.

Philosophers are made, not born, so we will practice, practice, practice our newly developing philosophical skills. Students new to philosophy often find it more difficult than they were expecting, but since our focus is on building our skills step-by-step, it is common to improve a lot during the semester – to be able to do lots of things at the end that you didn't know how to do (well) at the start. So, don't get discouraged! Learning new things always takes time & practice, and I'm here to help if you get stuck.

To succeed, you need to prepare yourself for class by reading actively and asking critical questions. You also need to form your own views and defend them with reasons both out loud and in writing. In doing those things, you can learn a lot about yourself and develop skills that are very useful at school, at work, and in your personal life.

## Required text

Gutting, Gary. *What Philosophy Can Do*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015.

- All readings are required unless marked as recommended.
- Readings that are not in the book will be available online via Canvas and are marked on the schedule with a \*.
- You should complete all the assigned readings BEFORE class on the day for which they are scheduled (and plan to read them again).
- Always bring a copy of the scheduled readings with you to class!

## Schedule

All groups of students are different in their interests, needs, and talents, so I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule (although I try to do that as little as possible and give as much warning as possible if and when I do).

Week 1: Philosophy & Politics

8/21: Introduction to the course

Read before class: the syllabus\* (\* means it is posted on Canvas)

Recommended reading: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. xi-xiv

8/23: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 1-7

8/25: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 8-15

1 point available via in class activity

For the 1st 2 WEEKS ONLY, copies of the readings from the book are posted on Canvas. I can't post more without violating copyright law (so please don't ask me to). If you have trouble getting a copy of the required book: (a) check the library / ILL, (b) borrow from / share with a classmate, or (c) come to my office hours to borrow mine.

Week 2: Philosophy & Politics

8/28: Homework #1: Argumentative Charity (10 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts (no new required reading)

5 additional points available during class

Recommended reading: reread everything assigned during Week 1

8/30: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 15-21

9/1: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 21-29

Week 3: Philosophy & Science

9/4: NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

9/6: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 30-38

1 point available in class

9/8: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 38-48

1 point available in class

Week 4: Philosophy & Science

9/11: Homework #2: Reflection on Decision-making (5 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts (no new reading)

5 additional points available in class

9/13: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 48-54

9/15: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 55-63

Homework #3: Argument Recreation (5 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts

Week 5: Philosophy & Science

9/18: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 63-69

1 point available in class

9/20: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 69-75

9/22: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 75-79

Homework #4: Argument Recreation (5 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts

Week 6: Philosophy & Science

9/25: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 79-83

9/27: Homework #5: Applying Philosophy to the News (10 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts

9/29: Day #2 of discussing Homework #5 (no new reading)

5 additional points available in class

Week 7: Midterms

10/2: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 83-88

10/4: IN-CLASS GROUP MIDTERM EXAM (40 points)

10/6: IN-CLASS INDIVIDUAL MIDTERM EXAM (40 points)

Week 8: Philosophy & Work

10/9: NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

10/11: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 141-147

Recommended reading: reread pp. 69-72 to refresh your memory about what we've already learned about happiness

1 point available in class

10/13: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 147-154

1 point available in class

Week 9: Philosophy & Work

10/16: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 154-163

10/18: Homework #6: Revising & Objecting to an Argument (10 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts (no new reading)

10/20: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 163-166

Week 10: Philosophy & Education

10/23: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 167-176

1 point available during class

10/25: Homework #7: Creating an Original Argument (10 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts (no new reading)

10/27: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 176-181

Week 11: Philosophy & Education

10/30: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 181-186

11/1: Read before class: Gutting, *What Philosophy Can Do*, pp. 186-194

11/3: Homework #8: Reflecting on New (To You) Ideas about Education (10 points) DUE 30 minutes before class starts

Week 12: Students' Choice: For the next few weeks, we will read a few articles on topics that you, the students, will choose by voting from a list of options that I will provide in advance. 5 points will be available in class sometime this week.

11/6: Students' Choice: TBD

11/8: Students' Choice: TBD

11/10: Students' Choice: TBD

Week 13: Students' Choice: Homework #9 (10 points) will be DUE sometime this week

11/13: Students' Choice: TBD

11/15: Students' Choice: TBD

11/17: Students' Choice: TBD

Week 14: Students' Choice

11/20: Students' Choice: TBD

1 point available during class

11/22: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

11/24: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING

Week 15: Students' Choice: Homework #10 (10 points) will be DUE sometime this week

11/27: Students' Choice: TBD

11/29: Students' Choice: TBD

12/1: Students' Choice: TBD

Week 16: Reflection on Philosophy (Metaphilosophy)

12/4: Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy," pp. 37-38\*

12/6: Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy," pp. 38-40\*

1 point available during class

12/8: Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy," pp. 40-41\*

Week 17: Conclusion

12/11: Review Session

1 point available during class

### **Final Exam**

Section 1 (which normally meets at 10 a.m.): Wednesday, December 13, from 9:45 to 11:45 am in our regular location, NQ 143

Section 2 (which normally meets at 11 a.m.): Thursday, December 14, from 9:45 to 11:45 am in our regular location, NQ 292

### **Assignments & Assessment**

All assignments (other than those completed during class):

- Need to be typed (double-spaced, please!!) and submitted (as attachments!!) electronically via Canvas
- Must include appropriate citations for all quotations *and paraphrases*, plus a complete list of bibliographic references at the end.
  - Please use the MLA style guide to format your citations and references.
  - You do not need to put the Works Cited section on a separate page.
  - Please do provide the URL for any sources found on the Internet.
- Will be given comments & grades electronically, via Canvas

- Will be graded anonymously, so PLEASE do NOT write your name within the document.
  - Empirical research shows that basically everyone has implicit (unconscious) biases, even if they are strongly committed to equality, fairness, and so on. Thankfully, we can do things to minimize the effects of implicit bias, and anonymous grading is an easy and effective one.

Attendance and active class participation are key to success in this course. Philosophy is an activity (something you do), not just something you passively watch or listen to. So, I expect you to come to class having done the assigned readings and ready to ask questions and explain your views. The quality and quantity of your contributions to discussion are the primary basis for your participation grade, but I also take into account office hours, notes you write on your card, and email conversations.

Generally, for homework, you will practice a specific skill as you do the reading BEFORE class, so your homework will be about material that we haven't yet discussed. You may not be used to that, but it has lots of benefits. It gives everyone an incentive to come to class prepared, which means we have better discussions during class. Completing the work on your own also helps you remember the material better than you otherwise would, which comes in handy for the final exam. It also helps you practice your critical thinking skills and makes you more independent thinkers, which is so, so valuable. Seeing how you do on your own also helps me figure out appropriate pacing, your interests, and other things that help me improve the course over time. However, if you have questions about the homework, you can always get in touch with me for clarification (earlier is always better!). You are also welcome to talk to classmates about homework, *so long as* everyone turns in their own original work; talking about the material with different people can be very useful, but everything you turn in should be written in your own words, using your own voice, not someone else's.

Late homework will not earn credit unless (a) you and I agree upon an alternate arrangement ahead of time, which requires planning and good reasons on your part, or (b) you experience a documented illness or other emergency beyond your control. In the latter case, you need to contact me with your documentation as soon as possible. Similarly, if you miss a class during which we do an in-class activity for credit, you will not earn credit for that activity, unless you've made arrangements with me ahead of time or show me appropriate documentation to excuse your absence. While late homework does not earn points (unless you fulfill (a) or (b)), I will give you feedback on late homework that you submit, so you have the opportunity to learn from your efforts.

On the midterm exams, you will be answering questions of the types that you have already answered on your homework – that is, you'll be asked to do tasks that you have already practiced and that we have already talked about quite a bit. See Canvas for much more detailed information about the exams as they draw nearer.

Here is the breakdown of the points available for different kinds of assignments:

- In-class assignments: 30 points
- Homework assignments: 85 points
- Group midterm exam: 40 points
- Individual midterm exam: 40 points
- Final exam: 90 points
- Participation: 15 points

Total: 300 points

Here is the schema I will use to convert points to letter grades:

A = 95% = 285 points	C = 73% = 219 points
A- = 90% = 270 points	C- = 70% = 210 points
B+ = 87% = 261 points	D+ = 67% = 201 points
B = 83% = 249 points	D = 63% = 189 points
B- = 80% = 240 points	D- = 60% = 180 points
C+ = 77% = 231 points	F < 60 % ≤ 179 points

### **Philosophical Writing**

In philosophical writing, every word and phrase matters. Since philosophical writing tend to be an unfamiliar and challenging form of writing for students, I recommend paying careful attention to (a) the detailed assignment prompts, (b) the detailed writing guidelines and tips posted on Canvas and discussed in class, and (c) the written feedback on your assignments.

In general, written assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Structure and Organization
  - a. Does it have a clear thesis statement in the first person?
  - b. Are there clear transitions between paragraphs & sections of the assignment?
  - c. Is the assignment well organized?
2. Exposition and Interpretation
  - a. Do you give a clear, accurate, and charitable interpretation of the view(s) considered?
  - b. Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) and their implications?
  - c. Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations to the text?
3. Argument and Critical Evaluation
  - a. Do you give rational arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?
  - b. When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?
  - c. Do you show that you have thought independently about issue(s)?
4. Writing Style
  - a. Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?
  - b. Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?
  - c. Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?

### **The Writing Center**

One key to improving your writing is getting feedback and revision suggestions on your text during the writing process. The Writing Center at Ball State offers free writing feedback sessions (online or face-to-face) to all students. They work with students on essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. Students can make an appointment by going to [www.bsu.edu/writingcenter](http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter), stopping by Robert Bell 295, or by calling 765-285-8370.

### **The Learning Center**

Did you know that the Learning Center offers free tutoring for many courses, including science and humanities, languages, math and business, help with any writing task, and study strategies, including time management, test taking, note taking, and effective textbook reading?

The Learning Center opens for Fall 2017 tutoring on Monday, August 28th, at 9 am. Hours are Monday-Thursday, 9 am-8 pm, and Friday, 9 am-12 pm. Call 765-285-3780 or visit NQ 350 to

make an appointment to meet with a tutor. Check them out online at [www.bsu.edu/learningcenter](http://www.bsu.edu/learningcenter). They can help!

### **Student Conduct**

A respectful, civil environment is crucial for learning any subject, but especially so for philosophy, which involves questioning, defending, and criticizing the beliefs and practices that mean the most to us. Conduct that interferes with other students' ability to learn or my ability to teach is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In particular, students should not interrupt other students or the professor; dominate class discussion; disparage or disrespect the ideas, beliefs, or practices of others (which does not mean that one cannot or should not respectfully provide reasons to disagree); habitually arrive late or leave early; make or receive phone calls; text; surf the internet; or use other technology that is not directly related to course goals.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academically honest students do not use others' ideas or words without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's work or thought as one's own original work or thought. If I discover that a student has plagiarized, cheated, or otherwise violated the academic dishonesty policy, the student will receive a score of zero for the assignment in question, and if the violation is sufficiently significant, may fail the course as whole, at my discretion.

More detailed resources relating to academic dishonesty and how to avoid it are posted on Canvas. If, after investigating them, you have questions, please contact me *as soon as possible*. It is much better for everyone if you get help clearing up any confusion right away, rather than waiting and needing to deal with a bigger problem.

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the various experiences and world views of those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our Beneficence Pledge. For Bias Incident Response service information, go to [bsu.edu/multiculturalcenter/bias](http://bsu.edu/multiculturalcenter/bias) or e-mail [mc2@bsu.edu](mailto:mc2@bsu.edu).

### **Disability Accommodations**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or [dsd@bsu.edu](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu).

### **Concerns or Problems**

If you have a concern or problem about the course, please contact me ASAP so we can work together on the best possible plan for moving forward! 😊