PHIL 1101 — Problems of Philosophy

T.J. Broy
thomas.broy@uconn.edu
Office: 104 Manchester Hall
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 pm — 3:00 pm or by appointment

Spring 2025
TR 11:00 am — 12:15 pm
401 Herbst Hall

1 Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy through the examination of six philosophical problems. Each problem will introduce us to a different area of philosophy: the problem of evil—philosophy of religion; the mind/body problem—the philosophy of mind; the problem of the many—metaphysics; the Gettier problem—epistemology; the trolley problem—ethics; and the demarcation problem—the philosophy of science.

2 Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and assess philosophical arguments
- Make connections between philosophical ideas and personal experiences and perspectives
- Understand some of the major views regarding several philosophical problems
- Demonstrate personal philosophical reflection through writing

3 Required Text

All readings are available on HuskyCT.

4 Grading

Your grade in the course will be composed of the following:

Reading Questions	20%
Discussion	20%
Quizzes	25%
Final Assessment	35%

Assignments and final grades will be according to the following scale:

A	93	Excellent
A-	90	Excellent
B+	88	Very good
B	83	Good
B-	80	Good
C+	78	Good
C	73	Average
C-	70	Fair
D+	68	Poor
D	63	Poor
D-	60	Merely passing
F		

5 Assignments

5.1 Reading Questions

Periodically throughout the course, class meetings will begin with students submitting short written responses to questions about the assigned reading. These can't be made-up in the case of student absence, but the lowest two grades will not be included in the grade calculation.

5.2 Discussion

Class time will be spent in a combination of lecture, in class activities, and discussion. On days allotted for discussion, students will submit a claims card. On either side of an index card, students will submit one substantive philosophical claim from the readings for that week which they agree with and would be willing to defend in class and one substantive philosophical claim which they disagree with and would be willing to critique in class. One of the two claims may be substituted for a substantive question about the assigned reading. Both claims (or both claim and question) should include a citation to the text.

5.3 Quizzes

There will be six quizzes assessing comprehension of the reading assignments. Quizzes will consist of five multiple choice questions to be answered at the end of class. Quizzes are open book and open note. The lowest quiz grade will not be included in the grade calculation.

5.4 Final Assessment

The final exam will consist of essay questions. Students will respond to four essay prompts from among a larger selection. Two of these responses will be expository in nature with students explaining some argument or position from the assigned reading. Two of these responses will be argumentative in nature with students making a philosophical argument of their own.

Instead of taking the final exam, students may elect to write a term paper. Students interested in choosing this option should inform me by Jan. 31 via email of their intention to do so. Details of the term paper requirements are available on HuskyCT.

5.5 Due Dates

Work will not be accepted after the due date. If for some reason you find yourself unable to complete your work by the due date, talk to me and we can discuss the possibility of an extension. Once the due date has passed, however, no late work will be accepted.

6 Electronics

The use of personal electronics (laptops, cell phones, etc.) is not permitted during class meetings except when such use is required as part of an approved accommodation.

7 Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is dishonest or unethical academic behavior that includes, but is not limited to, misrepresenting mastery in an academic area (e.g., cheating), failing to properly credit information, research, or ideas to their rightful originators, representing such information, research, or ideas as your own (e.g., plagiarism), or using ChatGPT (or similar) to generate material which is submitted in fulfillment of an assignment. Any instances of academic misconduct will result in grade penalties ranging from a lower grade on the assignment to failure of the course and will be reported to the Office of Community Standards. Information about university policies regarding academic misconduct is available at https://community.uconn.edu/academic-misconduct/.

8 Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence

Academic and professional excellence can flourish only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. All members of the University community are responsible for the maintenance of an academic and work environment in which people are free to learn and work without fear of discrimination or discriminatory harassment. In addition, inappropriate amorous relationships can undermine the University's mission when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their authority. To that end, and in accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination and discriminatory harassment, as well as inappropriate amorous relationships, and such behavior will be met with appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the University. Additionally, to protect the campus community, all non-confidential University employees (including faculty) are required to report sexual assaults, intimate partner violence, and/or stalking involving a student that they witness or are told about to the Office of Institutional Equity. Please be aware that while the information you provide will remain private, it will not be confidential and will be shared with University officials. More information is available at https://equity.uconn.edu and https://titleix.uconn.edu. Information about accessing medical care can be found at https://titleix.uconn.edu/get-help/urgent-medical-care/. Information about accessing confidential resources relating to sexual assualt and domestic violence can be found at https://titleix.uconn.edu/get-help/confidential-advocacy/.

9 Disability Accommodation

If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or https://csd.uconn.edu/.

10 Course Schedule

Topic (dates)	Reading	Quiz and discussion
Logic & Argumentation (Jan. 21—Jan. 23)	Syllabus	
The Problem of Evil (Jan. 28—Feb. 6)	Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"	Feb. 6
The Mind/Body Problem (Feb. 11—Feb. 20)	Nagel, "What is It Like to Be a Bat?"	Feb. 20
The Problem of the Many (Feb. 25—Mar. 6)	Unger, "The Problem of the Many"	Mar. 6
The Gettier Problem (Mar. 11—Mar. 27)	Gettier, "Is Justified, True Belief Knowledge?"	Mar. 27
The Trolley Problem (Apr. 1—Apr. 10)	Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"	Apr. 10
The Demarcation Problem (Apr. 15—Apr. 24)	Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*	Apr. 24
The Value of Philosophy (Apr 29)	Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"	
Final Exam Review (May 1)		