

PHIL 11001: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY (SPRING 2025)
T/TH 11AM-12:15PM
T/TH 2:15PM-3:30PM

PROFESSOR: David Pereplyotchik **EMAIL:** dpereply@kent.edu **TEL.** 917.667.5838

PRIMARY OFFICE HOURS: T/Th, 12:30-2pm and 3:30-5:30pm; M/W/F anytime, but virtually over Teams

Course Description: This course will focus on introductory readings concerning a variety of philosophical topics, including consciousness, free will, moral responsibility, punishment, law, government, subjectivity/objectivity, justice, equality, freedom, and other moral/political ideals.

Kent Core: This course may be used to satisfy a Kent Core requirement. The Kent Core as a whole is intended to broaden intellectual perspectives, foster ethical and humanitarian values, and prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers.

Diversity: This course may be used to satisfy the University Diversity requirement. Diversity courses provide opportunities for students to learn about such matters as the history, culture, values and notable achievements of people other than those of their own national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender, physical and mental ability, and social class. Diversity courses also provide opportunities to examine problems and issues that may arise from differences, and opportunities to learn how to deal constructively with them.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement: Kent State University is committed to the creation and maintenance of equitable and inclusive learning spaces. This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have an equitable opportunity to succeed. The diversity that each student brings to this course is viewed as a strength and a benefit. Dimensions of diversity and their intersections include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, national origin, primary language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, family/caregiver status, and veteran status.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Readings

Required readings for every class session are listed in the course schedule below. Note that reading philosophical texts is different from reading plot-driven novels or short stories. With argumentative writing, it often happens that you need to read the text *more than once* to grasp its meaning. If after multiple readings you still feel like you don't understand the main points, please contact me with detailed questions that reference specific parts of the text.

Approximately 11 weekly “micro” assignments (5-10% each, total 75% of the final grade)

There will be approximately 11 “micro” assignments throughout the semester, with the word-count minimum ranging from 500 to 1000 words. Instructions for each assignment will be on Canvas. Longer or more complicated assignments will be worth more points.

One final “macro” essay (15% of the final grade)

You will be asked to write one argumentative essay. The *absolute minimum* length of the essay is 1500 words, though you are encouraged to write as much as you feel you need to in order to cover the topic. Please note that you will *not* be able to receive credit for any paper that does not meet the strict word-count requirement.

I will provide detailed instructions for the paper approximately 2 weeks before it’s due. We will also take some class time to go over the basics of writing a philosophical essay, with a focus on constructing an effective *thesis statement* and organizing your ideas into a cogent *argument*. In general, philosophical writing should be clear, focused, persuasive, and attentive to detail. It should strive to express complex ideas in commonsense terms, with an eye for academic standards of diction. Most importantly, it must take into account the arguments of multiple sides on an issue.

The biggest factor in determining the grade on a philosophical paper is the strength of the overall argument, and the author’s ability to anticipate and forestall challenges to his or her claims and inferences. Also important is the author’s care with factual claims (which often require citation), as well as his or her comprehension of the course material.

The grade is *never* based on the viewpoint that the author has chosen to argue for. The goal of this course is to teach students to reason well about difficult abstract issues. Success in the course consists in learning to argue well for your conclusions, whatever they happen to be.

Late papers will be accepted, but may be subject to a decrease in the grade, depending on individual circumstances. To submit a late paper, please discuss your situation with me by email or in person.

Class Participation (10% of the final grade)

Class participation consists in contributing to class discussion by asking questions or making comments that demonstrate a grasp of the course material and an interest in the topics. Although attendance is required, it does *not* count as class participation. I think of participation as a kind of intellectual investment in the course, which goes beyond simply completing the reading and writing assignments.

Some students will initially find it difficult to speak up in front of a crowd. Nevertheless, public speaking is an essential aspect of the course, and also a requirement; no student can receive an A in the course without engaging actively in class discussion. To make the class participation grade as objective as possible, you will be asked to write down some keywords from your contribution to the class discussion at the end of *each* class session. Please make sure to do this before leaving the class.

Limited class participation credit can also be earned by engaging with me at length by email or in office hours.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory; excessive absences or lateness (more than 2) will negatively impact your final grade in the course. More than 5 absences constitutes grounds for failing the course.

A sign-in sheet will be passed around during each class session. All students are expected to come to class on time and to be engaged for the length of the class session. If you miss multiple class sessions, please discuss your situation with me, either in person or by email. Students who are absent from class for religious reasons or due to documented medical treatment will not incur any penalty on their final grade, but are responsible for all required reading and writing assignments.

Grading

Here is a summary of how your final grade will be calculated:

- 10-12 “micro” assignments: 75%
- Final paper: 15%
- Class participation: 10%

The following provides a translation from the numerical score to a letter grade:

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|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| A 93-100 | B+ 86-89 | C+ 71-75 | D 56-60 |
| A- 90-92 | B 81-85 | C 66-70 | F 55 or below |
| | B- 76-80 | C- 61-65 | |

There is no “curve” for the course. This means that you are *not* in competition with your classmates for high grades. It is conceivable—though exceedingly unlikely—that everyone in the course will receive an A. Or a D. When you receive your final grade for the course, please note that it is *non-negotiable*. I will not change grades under any circumstances, unless I have made a demonstrable clerical error in my calculations.

OFFICE HOURS AND AVAILABILITY

My primary office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. (This may change as the semester continues; I will announce any changes.) We can also have “virtual meetings” on Teams—whether in a group or one-on-one. In *extreme emergencies*, you can call/text me on my phone: 917.667.5838. Please do not abuse this mode of contact; act respectfully.

Needless to say, I can be reached by email at any time. I will do my best to respond to your emails as quickly as possible. Sometimes I will reply to your message immediately, but please do not assume that this is always possible. Occasionally, I will not have access to email or will not be able to answer your query for up to several days. In such cases, please be patient.

PLAGIARISM, CHEATING, USING AI, AND OTHER FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Please note that I do not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form. I take a strict stance on this. Be aware that I will dole out maximum penalties for violations, including assigning failing grades and pushing for suspension and/or expulsion from Kent State. If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, make it your business to learn about this immediately. Ignorance of university policy will not be accepted as an excuse. University policy 3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at www.kent.edu/plagiarism

Important: *If I detect the use of artificial intelligence (“large-language models”) such as Chat GPT in any part of your work, you will immediately fail the course. There are no exceptions to this policy.*

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Kent State University is committed to inclusive and accessible education experiences for all students. University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to establish accommodations. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic medical conditions, or injuries), please let me know immediately.

Location: University Library, Suite 100

Email: sas@kent.edu

Phone: 330-672-3391

Web: www.kent.edu/sas

REGISTRATION AND WITHDRAWAL DEADLINES

University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule, using Student Tools in FlashLine, prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to that deadline. Information about official registration and withdrawal deadlines is available [here](#).

<https://www.kent.edu/registrar/fall-important-dates>

<https://www.kent.edu/registrar/how-withdraw>

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per term, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences.

The request for excusal must be made, in writing, no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction in a particular course and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire.

You will be notified by me if your request for accommodation is approved, or, if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

COURSE SCHEDULE

All readings are required. Schedule is subject to change.

INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, Jan 14: Introduction to the course; no readings

Thursday, Jan 16: Introduction to the course; no readings

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND: DUALISM

Tuesday, Jan 21: Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, ch. 2, pp. 11-35

Thursday, Jan 23: Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, ch. 2, pp. 11-35

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND: MATERIALISM

Tuesday, Jan 28: Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, ch. 2, pp. 40-72

Thursday, Jan 30: Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, ch. 2, pp. 40-72

PERSONAL IDENTITY, THE SELF, AND DEATH

Tuesday, Feb 4: Daniel Dennett, “[The Reality of Selves](#)”

Thursday, Feb 6: Daniel Dennett, “[Where am I?](#)”

DO WE HAVE FREE WILL? HARD DETERMINISM: “NOPE!”

Tuesday, Feb 11: Sam Harris, *Free Will*

Thursday, Feb 13: Sam Harris, *Free Will*

FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY: COMPATIBILISM TO THE RESCUE?

Tuesday, Feb 18: Daniel Dennett, “[Reflections on Free Will: A Review](#)”

Thursday, Feb 20: Dennett vs. Caruso, “[Just Deserts](#)”

CRIME, LAWS, AND PRISONS

Tuesday, Feb 25: Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, chs. 1-3

Thursday, Feb 27: Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, chs. 4-6

LIBERTARIANISM: FREEDOM, PRIVATE PROPERTY, AND CAPITALISM

- Tuesday, Mar 4:** Michael Sandel, *Justice*, Chapter 4: “[Libertarianism](#)”
- Thursday, Mar 6:** Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose*, chs. 7 and 8
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LIBERTARIANISM AND FREE-MARKET CAPITALISM: SOME CRITIQUES

- Tuesday, Mar 18:** Stephen Metcalf, “[The Liberty Scam](#)”
- Thursday, Mar 20:** Samuel Arnold, “[Socialism](#)”
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SOCIALISM: ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST

- Tuesday, Mar 25:** Samuel Arnold, “[Socialism](#)”
- Thursday, Mar 27:** Samuel Arnold, “[Socialism](#)”
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FACTORY FARMING: THE ETHICS OF EATING MEAT

- Tuesday, Apr 1:** James Rachels, “[The Moral Argument for Vegetarianism](#)”
- Thursday, Apr 3:** Immanuel Kant, “[Why We Have No Obligations to Animals](#)”
Tibor Machan, “[Do Animals Have Rights?](#)”
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CLIMATE CHANGE: ETHICS

- Tuesday, Apr 8:** James Garvey, *The Ethics of Climate Change*, chs. 1, 4, 6
- Thursday, Apr 10:** James Garvey, *The Ethics of Climate Change*, chs. 1, 4, 6
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CLIMATE CHANGE: POLITICS

- Tuesday, Apr 15:** Naomi Klein, “[Capitalism vs. Climate](#)”
- Thursday, Apr 17:** Joseph Desjardins, *Environmental Ethics* (excerpts)
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CLIMATE CHANGE: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND ECOSABOTAGE

- Tuesday, Apr 22:** Hargrove, Abbey: “[The Ethics of Ecological Sabotage: An Exchange](#)”
- Thursday, Apr 24:** Bron Taylor, “[Resistance](#)”
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Tuesday, Apr 29 and May 1: TBA

FINAL PAPER due no later than Friday, May 9th, at midnight