



PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Term: Fall 2026

Credits: 3.0

Meeting Times & Location: Multiple sections. Your section's days, time, room, and instructor are listed in AlkimiHub and on your Canvas course page.

Modality: In-Person

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Instructor Information

- **Course Coordinator:** Dr. Miriam Adler (Assistant Professor of Philosophy)
- **Section Instructors:** Listed for each section in AlkimiHub. Your section instructor's office hours and office are posted in your Canvas course page.
- **Email:** madler@university.alkimi.ai
- **Office:** Lovell Hall 244
- **Coordinator Office Hours:**
 - Tuesday & Thursday: 3:30–5:00 p.m. (In person, Lovell Hall 244)
 - Monday: 4:00–5:00 p.m. (Virtual via Zoom; link posted in Canvas)
 - Also available by appointment.

Course Description

Classic questions of philosophy (knowledge, mind, free will, God, and the good life) read through major thinkers from Plato to the present, with practice in constructing and evaluating arguments. PHIL 101 introduces students to systematic philosophical inquiry into fundamental questions concerning reality, knowledge, consciousness, morality, and meaning. We examine foundational debates across the history of Western philosophy, reading classic texts alongside contemporary analytical viewpoints. Students learn to reconstruct philosophical arguments with precision, interrogate underlying presuppositions, formulate counterexamples, and articulate rigorous written defenses of their own philosophical positions on skepticism, personal identity, determinism, and the nature of justice.

Prerequisites

None.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of PHIL 101, students will be able to:

1. **Reconstruct and Evaluate Arguments:** Identify premises, conclusions, logical validity, and soundness in primary philosophical texts and contemporary argumentation.
2. **Analyze Epistemological Questions:** Evaluate competing theories of knowledge, epistemic justification, radical skepticism, and the limits of rational inquiry.
3. **Investigate Mind and Free Will:** Examine major philosophical perspectives on the mind-body problem, consciousness, artificial intelligence, determinism, and moral responsibility.

4. **Compare Normative Ethical Frameworks:** Critique and apply consequentialist, deontological, and virtue ethics frameworks to enduring moral dilemmas and personal obligation.
5. **Formulate Thesis-Driven Philosophical Writing:** Compose clear, analytically rigorous essays that articulate a contestable thesis, anticipate objections, and offer reasoned defenses.

Required Course Materials & Approximate Costs

1. **John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, eds. *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. 9th ed., Oxford University Press, 2021.** Approx. \$45 digital rental, \$85 print purchase.
2. **Alkimi Guide to Philosophical Writing and Argument Reconstruction.** Free digital access provided on Canvas.
3. **Total estimated cost:** \$45 to \$85.

Generative AI Policy (AI Level 1: AI Not Permitted for Graded Work)

In accordance with Alkimi University Academic Policies (Student Handbook §5.8), PHIL 101 operates under **AI Level 1**.

- **What is permitted:** You may use generative AI tools to explore general background definitions of philosophical terms or review rules of spelling and standard punctuation on preliminary drafts.
- **What is prohibited:** You may not use generative AI to compose thesis statements, formulate counterarguments, draft textual analyses, generate reading responses, or complete examination essays.
- **Disclosure:** All submitted essays must conclude with a signed statement certifying: 'I certify that this paper represents my own original philosophical reasoning and prose without generative AI assistance.'

Grading Components and Weights

- **Philosophical Essay 1: Skepticism and Knowledge:** 20% (Due Friday, September 25 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Midterm Examination:** 15% (In class during week 8 (week of October 12))
- **Philosophical Essay 2: Mind and Agency:** 20% (Due Friday, November 13 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Weekly Argument Reconstructions:** 15% (Weekly short argument analyses and reading responses submitted in Canvas on Mondays at 11:59 p.m.; lowest score dropped)
- **Discussion and Seminar Engagement:** 10% (Active, respectful, and prepared engagement in weekly discussion section dialogues)
- **Final Philosophical Thesis Essay:** 20% (Due Monday, December 14, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.)

Grading Scale (Alkimi University Standard)

- **A:** 93–100% | **A-:** 90–92%
- **B+:** 87–89% | **B:** 83–86% | **B-:** 80–82%
- **C+:** 77–79% | **C:** 73–76% | **C-:** 70–72%
- **D+:** 67–69% | **D:** 60–66% | **F:** Below 60%
- **Extra credit:** No extra credit assignments are offered in PHIL 101. Students should focus their energy on developing clear, well-argued papers and engaging in seminar discussions.

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

All sections follow this common weekly schedule. Section meeting days vary, so dates are shown by week; your section instructor posts exact class dates in Canvas.

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 1	Aug 26–Aug 28	The Nature of Philosophical Inquiry and Argumentation: What is philosophy? Deductive vs. inductive arguments,	<i>First day of classes: Wed Aug 26.</i>

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
		validity, soundness, and Socratic cross-examination in Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i> and <i>Apology</i> . Reading: Perry et al., Part I (Plato)	
Week 2	Aug 31–Sep 4	Epistemology: Cartesian Skepticism and the Foundations of Certainty: Radical skepticism, the dream argument, the evil demon, and the cogito in Descartes' <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (Meditations I–II). Reading: Perry et al., Part II (Descartes)	Wed Sep 2: Add/section change deadline.
Week 3	Sep 8–Sep 11	Empiricism and the Problem of Induction: Empiricism, impressions and ideas, the problem of induction, and the uniformity of nature in David Hume's <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> . Reading: Perry et al., Part II (Hume)	Mon Sep 7: Labor Day (no classes). Wed Sep 9: Census date (last day to drop without a W).
Week 4	Sep 14–Sep 18	The Analysis of Knowledge and Gettier Cases: The traditional tripartite definition of knowledge as justified true belief; Edmund Gettier's counterexamples and responses to Gettier. Reading: Perry et al., Part II (Gettier, Nozick)	—
Week 5	Sep 21–Sep 25	The Mind-Body Problem: Dualism and Its Discontents: Substance dualism, the interaction problem, and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia's objection to Descartes; Essay 1 due Friday. Reading: Perry et al., Part III (Descartes, Elisabeth)	Philosophical Essay 1: Skepticism and Knowledge due Fri Sep 25 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 6	Sep 28–Oct 2	Physicalism, Identity Theory, and Subjective Experience: Physicalism, logical behaviorism, mind-brain identity theory, and the explanatory gap in contemporary philosophy of mind. Reading: Perry et al., Part III (Smart, Nagel)	—
Week 7	Oct 5–Oct 9	Functionalism, Consciousness, and Artificial Intelligence: Functionalism, multiple realizability, Alan Turing's imitation game, and John Searle's Chinese Room argument against strong AI. Reading: Perry et al., Part III (Turing, Searle)	—
Week 8	Oct 14–Oct 16	Free Will and Determinism: The Incompatibilist Challenge: Determinism, causal closure, incompatibilism, hard determinism, and moral responsibility; Midterm Examination in class (Fall Break week). Reading: Perry et al., Part IV (Stace, Chisholm)	Oct 12–Oct 13: Fall break (no classes). Fri Oct 16: Midterm grades due. Midterm Examination (in class this week).
Week 9	Oct 19–Oct 23	Compatibilism, Agency, and Moral Responsibility: Compatibilist accounts of freedom, hierarchical desires (Frankfurt), reactive attitudes (Strawson), and moral praise and blame. Reading: Perry et al., Part IV (Frankfurt, Strawson)	—
Week 10	Oct 26–Oct 30	Personal Identity and Survival Over Time: Locke's psychological continuity theory of personal identity, memory criteria, split-brain cases, and Derek Parfit's bundle theory. Reading: Perry et al., Part IV (Locke, Parfit)	—
Week 11	Nov 2–Nov 6	Philosophy of Religion: God and Rational Justification: Classical arguments for the existence of God: Anselm's ontological argument, Aquinas's Five Ways, and Paley's design argument. Reading: Perry et al., Part V (Anselm, Aquinas, Paley)	Fri Nov 6: Last day to withdraw (W) or elect Pass/No Pass.
Week 12	Nov 9–Nov 13	The Problem of Evil and Epistemic Risk: The logical and evidential problems of evil (Mackie); soul-making theodicy (Hick); Pascal's Wager; Essay 2 due Friday. Reading: Perry et al., Part V (Mackie, Hick, Pascal)	Philosophical Essay 2: Mind and Agency due Fri Nov 13 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 13	Nov 16–Nov 20	Normative Ethics: Consequentialism and Utilitarianism: Classical utilitarianism, the principle of utility, Bentham's hedonic calculus, Mill's qualitative pleasures, and act vs. rule utilitarianism. Reading: Perry et al., Part VI (Bentham, Mill)	—
Week 14	Nov 23–Nov 24	Deontology and Kantian Moral Law (Thanksgiving Week): Deontological moral theory, the good will, duty, and the Formula of Universal Law and Formula of Humanity (Thanksgiving week). Reading: Perry et al., Part VI (Kant)	Nov 25–Nov 27: Thanksgiving break (no classes).

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 15	Nov 30–Dec 4	Virtue Ethics and Human Flourishing: Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , the teleological view of human action, eudaimonia, virtue as the golden mean, and moral character development. <i>Reading: Perry et al., Part VI (Aristotle)</i>	—
Week 16	Dec 7–Dec 9	Justice, Meaning, and Philosophical Synthesis: Political legitimacy, social contract foundations (Hobbes, Rawls), existential meaning (Camus, Sartre), and comprehensive course review. <i>Reading: Perry et al., Part VII and Review</i>	<i>Wed Dec 9: Last day of classes. Thu Dec 10: Reading Day.</i>
Finals	Dec 14	Final Philosophical Thesis Essay due Monday, December 14, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.	No final examination.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Philosophy is practiced through active, rigorous dialogic exchange. Regular attendance and punctual arrival are required in all lecture and discussion sections. Students are allowed two unexcused absences; each subsequent unexcused absence results in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade on your final course grade. Missing more than five class sessions will result in a failing grade. Students who miss the first two class meetings without notifying the instructor may be dropped. Students may miss class for religious observance without penalty if they notify the instructor in writing within the first two weeks of the semester (by Wednesday, September 9, 2026). Absences for university-sponsored activities (athletics, performances, conferences) are excused with a letter from the sponsoring office at least one week in advance.

Late Work Policy

Formal philosophical essays submitted late lose one-third of a letter grade per day (e.g., from A to A-) and will not be accepted after four days past the deadline without prior documented approval. Weekly argument responses cannot be accepted late.

Final Exam Policy

PHIL 101 has no final examination. The final philosophical thesis essay takes its place. Nothing is due on Reading Day (Thursday, December 10, 2026).

Academic Integrity

Alkimi University is an academic community devoted to rigorous scholarship, open intellectual inquiry, and uncompromising ethical conduct. All students are subject to the regulations of the Alkimi University Academic Integrity Policy. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication of empirical data, and unauthorized submission of academic work generated by artificial intelligence—undermines the integrity of the university and carries severe disciplinary sanctions. Sanctions range from a failing grade on an assignment or exam to an administrative course failure recorded as an 'XF' on the official transcript, academic suspension, or expulsion. Suspected violations are formally investigated and resolved through the Office of Academic Integrity in accordance with Faculty Handbook §6. For detailed information, consult the Office of Academic Integrity, Lovell Hall 315, (555) 555-0163, integrity@university.alkimi.ai.

Accessibility Services

Alkimi University is committed to providing equitable educational access and reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities, including physical, sensory, psychological, learning, and chronic health conditions. Students requesting academic accommodations must formally register with the Office of Accessibility Services, Harlan Hall 204, (555) 555-0155, access@university.alkimi.ai. Once approved, students will receive an official Faculty Accommodation Letter detailing approved accommodations.

Students should present this letter to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and at least one week prior to any exam or assignment requiring accommodation. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively.

Student Wellness and Mental Health

Your physical health, psychological well-being, and mental health are essential to your academic success. If you experience heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, personal trauma, or academic burnout, free, confidential counseling and medical care are available through the Hollis Health & Counseling Center, located in the Hollis Center. Routine appointments are available Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. during the semester by calling (555) 555-0190 or emailing health@university.alkimi.ai. Urgent, 24/7 crisis psychological counseling is accessible immediately at (555) 555-0199.

Campus Student Support Services

- **Academic Advising Center:** Lovell Hall 101 | (555) 555-0158 | advising@university.alkimi.ai
- **Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Free consultations on papers, reports, and research projects at any stage.
- **Whitcombe Library:** Whitcombe Library, Main Floor | (555) 555-0170 | askalibrarian@university.alkimi.ai
- **Hollis Health & Counseling Center:** Hollis Center | (555) 555-0190 | 24/7 Counseling Line: (555) 555-0199 | health@university.alkimi.ai
- **The Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Consultations on thesis development, argument structure, and clarity in philosophical writing.