**PHIL 6-04: Introduction to Philosophy (Online)**

**California State University / Fall 2021**

*Instructor:* Jonathan M. Tees

*Class time:* Online (asynchronous)

*Office Hours:* via Zoom; by appointment\*

*Email:* [j.m.tees@csus.edu](mailto:jonathan.tees@csus.edu)

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| **Contacting Me** |

If you need to get in touch with me, please send me an email and I will respond within 24 hours. Please note: Though I do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, I am not always able to check my email on weekends. So, if you happen to write to me on a Friday afternoon/evening, it might take me until Monday to respond.

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| **Course Description** |

From the course catalog*:*

A representative selection of philosophical problems will be explored in areas such as knowledge, reality, religion, science, politics, art and morals.

From me:

Philosophy involves thinking really hard about some of the most perennial questions of human existence and experience. This class is an invitation for you to enter into conversation with philosophers and thinkers, both past and present, on questions like:

* *Does God exist?*
* *Do we have free will or are all of our actions somehow determined by factors outside of our control?*
* *Are we merely physical beings, or do we have nonphysical “parts” as well—a mind or soul, say?*
* *Do we really know the things we take ourselves to know?*
* *Is morality an objective feature of the world or is it relative to cultures, societies, or individuals?*
* *What is the “good life”? How should I live?...*and much else besides.

It would be a mistake to think of philosophy as *merely* an intellectual pursuit. Philosophy also has immense practical import, as well. Philosophy invites us to consider our *worldview*—the set of beliefs that influence our actions and decisions—to test whether we hold rational and true beliefs about the world. Philosophy can help us become more *humble* (by admitting what we don’t know), *open-minded* (by considering carefully and charitably the opposing views of others), *curious* (by helping us formulate new questions and seek satisfying answers), and intellectually *autonomous* (we are encouraged to think critically for ourselves rather than accept claims on the sole basis that others accept them). For these reasons, it’s my belief that philosophy is *empowering*. I’m excited to dive in.

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| **Student Learning Outcomes** |

1. **Describe and distinguish** key philosophical concepts in the main subfields of philosophy, including concepts such as free will, mind, knowledge, belief, reality, faith, reason, good, etc.
2. **Read and comprehend** philosophical texts, both classical and contemporary.
3. **Discuss** core philosophical problems, such as whether there is a god, what does it mean to be conscious, are we free to make choices, what is justice, etc.
4. **Explain and defend** a position on basic philosophical problems.
5. **Write** clear and concise explanations and arguments about basic philosophical problems.

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| **Area C-2 Learning Objectives, Introduction to the Humanities (G.E., 3 units)** |

This course fulfills the General Education Requirements of [Area C-2: Humanities](http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/ge%20assessment/area%20c2%20learning%20outcomes.pdf). The learning objectives associated with C2 focuses on the human condition.

**C-2 Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
2. Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
3. Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
4. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.
5. Explain and defend a position on basic philosophical problems.

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| **Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD)** |

A student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability (whether visible or invisible) should contact SSWD at (916) 278-6955 (or email [sswd@csus.edu](mailto:sswd@csus.edu)). For students who have already been determined eligible for services, please provide me with the proper form from SSWD in a timely manner—at the beginning of the semester and at least one week prior to the verified and identified need.

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| **Textbooks** |

1. Cahn, Steven M. *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, 6th edition. Oxford. (Required)  
   ISBN: 9780190674335
   * This book contains classic and contemporary readings in philosophy that are carefully edited to give the introductory student readings that are comprehensive, yet manageable in their length.
2. King, Nathan L. *The Excellent Mind: Intellectual Virtues for Everyday Life*. Oxford. (Required)  
   ISBN: 9780190096267
   * This book was published only a few months ago, and thus, it’s my first time using it. Philosophy is all about thinking well. This book helps us think about what it means to be a good, virtuous thinker.

\*Occasionally, we’ll have additional readings from outside our textbooks. These will be in PDF format on Canvas (in “Files”).

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| **Online Course Assumptions & Requirements** |

This course will be entirely online. Some students do really well with online classes while others find them much more challenging. There is a substantial burden on the student to take charge of their own learning and maintain motivation to complete all that the course requires. No matter which category you fall into, this course assumes the following:

1. You will be able to work *independently* and can schedule sufficient time for reading, study, viewing each week’s lessons, and completing assignments on time.
2. You have a place of study where you can focus on lessons and assignments.
3. You have reliable access to a computer and wi-fi, whether it be a computer at home, from a library, or from the computer lab. If you don’t have reliable access to these, then an online class isn’t the best option for you.
4. You will obtain a copy of our textbook(s) by Week 2. Digital copies are fine so long as you are able to navigate the book in a way that works for you.

Given these assumptions, you should carefully consider whether you can manage these expectations. If you cannot, for whatever reason, I recommend waiting to take this course on campus.

**Navigating Canvas**

You will need to familiarize yourself with Canvas—our learning management system. There are helpful tutorials on Canvas. However, here is a brief guide for using Canvas weekly:

1. Log on to Canvas (lrccd.instructure.com)
2. Click on our class (Phil 6,04 Introduction to Philosophy)
3. Once on our site, you will immediately see the Modules page. On this page, you’ll find the week’s lessons and assignments. There is a sidebar that will contain the following (most important) tabs:
   1. Assignments (where you’ll find the complete list of assignments).
   2. Files (where you’ll find the syllabus, PDF readings, assignment instructions/rubrics, etc.)
   3. Quizzes (where you’ll find reading quizzes and exams)
   4. Discussions (where you’ll see all of the discussion forums)

Canvas allows you to access your grades and get in contact with me. It is vitally important to get familiar with the Canvas system. Please get in touch with me if you need further guidance/help.

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| **Assignments** |

Your final grade will be based on the following tasks:

1. Participation (80 points)
2. Reading Quizzes (8) (80 points; 10 points ea.)
3. Paraphrases (4) (40 points; 10 points ea.)
4. Intellectual Virtues Journal (80 points)
5. Exams (2) (200 points; 100 points ea.)  
   **Total: 480 points**

**1. Participation (80 points)**

Since this class is solely online, your participation grade will be exclusively based on your discussion posts and your responses to your peers. For the sake of not being overwhelmed with the number of posts you (or I) see on the discussion thread, each student will be assigned to a discussion group with 5 to 7 of their peers. Each week, there will be a discussion prompt related to the week’s lessons. There are two parts to the weekly discussion:

1. *First*, you are to select the prompt you find most engaging and write up a response to it in no less than 150 words. Posts should be (a) reasonably **relevant** to the prompt, (b) **substantial—** the post is as long as it needs to be and no less, and (c) **thoughtful**—the post demonstrates to me (and your peers) that you have thought about the prompt. Your initial responses are due on Wednesdays of the week they are assigned.
2. *Second*, in no less than 50 words, you are to respond to *at least* one of your peers’ posts. You can agree or disagree with them, but merely saying “I agree” or “I disagree” won’t suffice. Rather, you should ask questions, offer challenges, and/or try to get them thinking more about the topic. Again, the goals are to make your responses relevant, substantial, and thoughtful.

How it’s assessed: failure to post your initial response will result in a 10-point deduction; failure to respond to at least one of your peers will result in a 5 point deduction; failure to post at all is a 20 point deduction. This means that if you were to miss 4 weeks of discussions, you’d receive a 0 for this assignment.

\*\*Posts that significantly violate the guidelines will not be accepted as complete. Late discussion posts are not accepted.

**2. Reading Quizzes (8) (80 points; 10 points ea.)**

There will be around 11 reading quizzes over the course of the term. These will be based solely on our Cahn textbook. The quizzes are designed to test you on the *basic facts* of each. Each quiz will consist of 5 objective questions (multiple-choice/true-false) worth 2 points each and timed for 12 minutes. Quizzes are due on **Sundays** by 11:59 pm of the week indicated on the course schedule. Textbooks and notes are acceptable, though you want to be aware of the time. I drop your two lowest scores. I do not allow quizzes to be made up or retaken unless there is a *prior arrangement* or a *verifiable* emergency.

Important note: philosophical texts are often challenging for students who are unacquainted with the subject. It is especially important to practice *active* reading—taking notes and ‘interrogating’ the text by asking it questions. Oftentimes and ideally, it requires more than one read. Keep this in mind as you do the reading assignments and prepare for the reading quizzes.

**3. Paraphrases (4) (40 points; 10 points ea.)**

You will be required to paraphrase four (4) passages from philosophical texts we read from our textbook. The aim of these assignments is to strengthen your ability to read and assess challenging philosophical texts. A detailed description and rubric for this assignment are provided on Canvas (“Files” → “paraphrases”). Each paraphrase assignment is worth ten (10) points and is usually on **Mondays**. The assignments / due dates are as follows…

* **P.1 (Descartes)**: **start** “So serious are the doubts…” (p. 173) **thru** “But what then am I?...” (p. 175). **8 paragraphs total**
* **P.2 (Reid)**: **start** “The conviction which every man…” (p. 246) **thru** “My personal identity…” (p. 247). **11 paragraphs total**
* **P.3 (Aristotle): start:** “Every art and every inquiry…” (p. 373) **thru** “Virtue, then, being of two kinds…” (p.374 ) **6 paragraphs total**
* **P.4 (Swinburne): start:** “The world...contains much evil…” (p. 260) **thru** “So then God...” (p. 266) **17 paragraphs total**

**4. Intellectual Virtues Journal (IVJ) (100 points)**

This assignment will be based on Nathan King’s *The Excellent Mind*. At the end of the semester, you will submit a journal assignment that contains your reflections on several of the intellectual virtues that King discusses in his book. This is due at the end of the term. A detailed description and rubric will be provided on Canvas.

**5. Exams (2) (200 points; 100 points ea.)**

There are two exams: a midterm and a final. The midterm will be during Week 8 and will cover material from Weeks 1-7; the final exam will be during finals week and cover material from Weeks 8-15. The exams are 50 objective questions (multiple-choice/true-false), with one 10-point extra-credit, short-answer question at the end. These will be timed exams and study guides will be provided two weeks in advance. Notes and books are acceptable, but be mindful of the time constraints!

**Late Assignments**

Late *writing* assignments will be accepted **up to one week after the due date** but will receive a 10% penalty for each day it is late. Late assignments will not receive feedback. This penalty will be waived in cases of verifiable emergencies or significant life events. Quizzes and exams cannot be completed late unless an arrangement was made prior to the due dates. If you have any foreseeable challenges to completing an assignment on time, please let me know *ahead of time* and I will *consider* a short extension.

**Grading**

A = 93-100% (465 - 500 points)

A- = 90-92% (450 - 464 points)

B+ = 87-89% (435 - 449 points)

B = 83-86% (415 - 434 points)

B- = 80-82% (400 - 414 points)

C+ =77-79% (385 - 399 points)

C = 73-76% (365 - 384 points)

C- = 70-72% (350 - 364 points)

D+ = 67-69% (335 - 349 points)

D = 63-66% (315 - 334 points)

D- = 60-62% (300 - 314 points)

F = 0-60% (0 - 299 points)

\*You can access your grades on Canvas throughout the semester.

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| **Other Notes Regarding the Course** |

**Virtual Classroom Conduct**

Our goal in this class is to engage in challenging and charitable dialogue in our discussion forums. We are going to be dealing with topics on which there is considerable disagreement. You might encounter differing political, religious, and philosophical beliefs that you think are misguided and unjustified. This is extremely important for growth in our thinking. *Challenging* dialogue helps us consider blind spots in our thinking and ultimately leads us to have well-reasoned beliefs. *Charitable* dialogue helps us to feel safe to engage in that project (which can often be uncomfortable). We are all (myself included!) trying to learn and come to a better understanding of ourselves and our world. It’s important to have space for one another as we think through these topics. Expressing disagreements is encouraged but must be civilly done. Derisive words and actions will not be tolerated.

The through line of our course will be the cultivation of several key **intellectual virtues** (King’s book *The Excellent Mind* is all about this)**:**

1. **Curiosity**: a disposition to wonder, ponder, and ask why. A thirst for understanding and a desire to explore.
2. **Intellectual humility**: a willingness to own up to one’s intellectual limitations and mistakes. Unconcerned with intellectual status or prestige.
3. **Intellectual autonomy**: a capacity for active, self-directed thinking. An ability to think and reason for oneself.
4. **Attentiveness**: a readiness to be “personally present” in the learning process. Keeps distractions at bay. Strives to be mindful and engaged.
5. **Intellectual carefulness**: a disposition to notice and avoid intellectual pitfalls and mistakes. Strives for accuracy.
6. **Intellectual thoroughness**: a disposition to seek and provide explanations. Unsatisfied with mere appearances or easy answers. Probes for deeper meaning and understanding.
7. **Open-mindedness**: an ability to think outside the box. Gives a fair and honest hearing to competing perspectives.
8. **Intellectual courage**: a readiness to persist in thinking or communicating in the face of fear, including fear of embarrassment or failure.
9. **Intellectual tenacity**: a willingness to embrace intellectual challenge and struggle. Keeps its “eyes on the prize” and doesn’t give up.

By the end of our course, it is my hope that we’ll all make progress in these virtues.

**Email Etiquette**

College is a great place to learn how to communicate professionally. Such skills will be of benefit to you as you leave college and enter a profession. To this end, I am instituting a (somewhat) formal email etiquette policy. Here are the guidelines:

1. Before you send the email, **see if you can find the answer** (e.g., in the syllabus).
2. Begin the email by addressing the instructor (e.g., ‘Jon’ is fine; if that’s uncomfortable, you may write “Professor Tees”).
3. Be sure to state your course and class time somewhere near the beginning.
4. After your message, end with a closing signature (e.g., ‘Sincerely, [Your Name], or ‘Thank you, [Your Name]).
5. Be clear and concise: make sure your message is easy to understand.
6. Use correct grammar and proper spelling! To ensure this, *proofread* your email before sending.
7. Allow 24 hours for a response (I’ll likely get back to you within that time frame).

To encourage you to get in the habit of better email etiquette, my plan is as follows: If I receive an email from you that does not make a sincere attempt to follow the recommendations outlined above, I may respond with a “canned” (pre-written) message that will politely ask you to rewrite your email and send again. *It doesn’t have to be perfect* (we all make mistakes), but I do require a good-faith attempt from you.

**Academic Honesty**

You are responsible for knowing the policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, found in the University Policy Manual ([www.csus.edu/umanual/student/STU-0100.htm](http://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/STU-0100.htm)).

Don’t cheat! Don’t plagiarize! You won’t like what happens. Assignments in which plagiarism and other forms of cheating are found will receive a 0 (not merely an F). *ALL* incidents of cheating and plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and the Student Conduct Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction.

To deter the student from this temptation, all written work will be filtered through Turnitin—a plagiarism checker that ensures academic integrity.

To be clear on different ways plagiarism occurs, see the following: <https://www.turnitin.com/static/plagiarism-spectrum/>

**Basic Needs**

Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food or shelter, which may affect their performance in the course, is encouraged to speak with the professor. You may also visit the Basic Needs website <https://www.csus.edu/basicneeds/>.

**Phil 6 Fall 2021 Course Schedule (subject to revisions)**

\*All page #s refer to our Cahn, *Exploring Philosophy*, **6th edition**. PDF files are accessible on Canvas.

\*\*Since a discussion post is expected each week, I didn’t include that in the final column. It’s a given.

\*\*\*All assignments (with the exception of discussion posts) are due Sundays of the week assigned.

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| **DATE** | **TOPIC** | **READING** | **ASSIGNMENTS** |
| Week 1  8/30 – 9/3 | PHILOSOPHY | \*read syllabus carefully\*  Beardsley and Beardsley, 3-12  Plato, “The Cave” (PDF) | -Post an introduction by 9/3 and say “hello” to at least one of your peers.  **Note**: if you fail to post a discussion by Friday, you may lose your spot in the class. |
| Week 2  9/6 - 9/10 | Cahn, et.al., 45-52; Barker, 53-58 //  Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus” (Canvas); Taylor, 679-87 ; Wolf, 687-90; Vitrano, 691-93 | RQ.1 (Camus) |
| Week 3  9/13 - 9/17 | KNOWLEDGE | Ayer, 72-74; Gettier, 74-75; Descartes, 94-98; Hume, 115-24 | RQ.2 (Hume) |
| Week 4  9/20 - 9/24 | Moore, “Proof of the External World” (Canvas); Moore, “Certainty” (Canvas) |  |
| Week 5  9/27 – 10/1 | MIND | Descartes, 173-78; Taylor, 137-40; Churchland, 140-52 | P.1 (Descartes)  RQ.3 (Taylor) |
| Week 6  10/4 – 10/8 | Nagel, 153-56; Jackson, 156-59; Searle, 165-67; Alexander, “Near Death Experiences…” (Canvas) | RQ.4 (Nagel)  *\*midterm study guide available* |
| Week 7  10/11 - 10/15 | PERSONS | Perry, 231-33; Reid, 246-50  Parfit, 233-37 | RQ.5 (Perry) |
| Week 8  10/18 - 10/22 | Nagel, 181-86; Stace, 186-88; Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self” (Canvas) | MIDTERM due 10/17 by 11:59pm |
| Week 9  10/25 - 10/29 | MORALITY | Regan, 331-34; Midgley, 335-39; Sartre, 369-72 | P.2 (Reid)  RQ.6 (Regan) |
| Week 10  11/1 – 11/5 | Kant, 378-82; O’Neill, 340-42; Mill, 383-90; Pojman, 342-49 | RQ.7 (Kant) |
| Week 11  11/8 - 11/12 | Driver, 349-51; Aristotle, 373-78; Warren, 406-17; Marquis, 418-23; Hursthouse, 424-32 | RQ.8 (Warren) |

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| **DATE** | **TOPIC** | **READING** | **ASSIGNMENTS** |
| Week 12  11/15 - 11/19 | GOD | Anselm, 284-88; Aquinas, 288-90 | P.3 (Aristotle) |
| Week 13  11/22 -11/26 | Paley, 312-15; White, “The Fine-Tuning…” (Canvas) | RQ.9 (White) |
| Week 14  11/29 – 12/3 | Antony, “No Good Reason…” (Canvas); Swinburne, 260-70 | RQ.10 (Antony)  P.4 (Swinburne)  *\*final study guide available* |
| Week 15  12/6 - 12/10 | SOCIETY | Nussbaum, 496-98; Mill, 525-33; Rawls, 541-545; Nozick, 545-59; Held, 550-557 | RQ.11 (Mill)  IVJ due 12/12 by 11:59 pm |
| FINALS  12/13 – 12/17 | FINAL EXAM |  | Exam due Fri, Dec. 17th by 11:59p |