

PHIL405

Course Summary

Course : PHIL405 **Title :** Metaphysics and Epistemology

Length of Course : 8 **Faculty :**

Prerequisites : N/A **Credit Hours :** 3

Description

Course Description: This course will cover basic themes in the topics of metaphysics and epistemology. It will investigate the basic question of "being," or what reality is most fundamentally, as well as the fundamental question of knowledge, or what distinguishes real knowledge from mere belief or opinion. Students will be asked to investigate questions regarding the existence or non-existence of God, and to critically examine leading metaphysical options such as theism, atheism, materialism, and idealism. They will also be considering questions regarding the acquisition and justification of various epistemic claims. Particular topics will include free will, determinism, skepticism, and truth.

Course Scope: This course covers a range of topics within metaphysics and epistemology across a broad tract of the history of philosophy. The class begins with fundamental questions of being and assesses metaphysical theories such as Platonic idealism and Epicurean materialism. The course then explores philosophical skepticism and fundamental questions of epistemology, such as the nature and limits of knowledge. The course considers arguments for and against the existence of God, and concludes with a consideration of free will, and the end, or telos, of human life.

Objectives

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO3) Analyze and distinguish between the competing metaphysical theses such as materialism, Platonism, idealism, and Cartesian dualism.

CO4) Appraise and interpret various theories of human nature and the nature and persistence of personal identity; consider arguments pertaining to personal immortality.

CO5) Define various forms of historical and contemporary skepticism and explain answers to these skeptical challenges.

CO6) Distinguish between competing epistemological theses regarding the nature of knowledge such as externalism, internalism, knowledge as “justified true belief” and the distinction between knowledge and mere belief.
CO7) Explain and interpret questions and theories pertaining to the nature and existence or non-existence of God and explore themes of natural theology.

CO8) Explain the philosophy of free will and dissect the interplay between determinism, responsibility, and freedom; become familiar with libertarianism, compatibilism, and hard determinism.

CO9) Illustrate the relationship between metaphysical and epistemological issues and estimate the meaning or purpose of human life.

Outline

Week 1: What is Reality? Part I: Materialism & Atomism

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO3) Analyze and distinguish between the competing metaphysical theses such as materialism, Platonism, idealism, and Cartesian dualism.

Reading & Resources

Week 1 Learning Materials

Week 1 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 1 Welcome Discussion

Week 1 Discussion

Week 2: What is Reality? Part II: Form and Matter

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO3) Analyze and distinguish between the competing metaphysical theses such as materialism, Platonism, idealism, and Cartesian dualism.

Reading & Resources

Week 2 Learning Materials

Week 2 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 2 Discussion

Week 2 Assignment

Week 3: What am I?

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO4) Appraise and interpret various theories of human nature and the nature and persistence of personal identity; consider arguments pertaining to personal immortality.

Reading & Resources

Week 3 Learning Materials

Week 3 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 3 Discussion

Week 4: Can I be Certain of Anything?

Course Objective(s)

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO5) Define various forms of historical and contemporary skepticism and explain answers to these skeptical challenges.

Reading & Resources

Week 4 Learning Materials

Week 4 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 4 Assignment

Week 5: What is Knowledge?

Course Objective(s)

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO6) Distinguish between competing epistemological theses regarding the nature of knowledge such as externalism, internalism, knowledge as “justified true belief” and the distinction between knowledge and mere belief.

Reading & Resources

Week 5 Learning Materials

Week 5 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 5 Discussion

Week 6: Does God Exist?

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO7) Explain and interpret questions and theories pertaining to the nature and existence or non-existence of God and explore themes of natural theology.

Reading & Resources

Week 6 Learning Materials

Week 6 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 6 Discussion

Week 7: Do I have Free Will?

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO2) Examine and explain the central questions of the epistemological tradition of Western philosophy.

CO8) Explain the philosophy of free will and dissect the interplay between determinism, responsibility, and freedom; become familiar with libertarianism, compatibilism, and hard determinism.

Reading & Resources

Week 7 Learning Materials

Week 7 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 7 Discussion

Week 8: What is the Purpose of Life?

Course Objective(s)

CO1) Examine and explain the central questions of the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy from Parmenides to the present.

CO9) Illustrate the relationship between metaphysical and epistemological issues and estimate the meaning or purpose of human life. Reading & Resources

Week 8 Learning Materials

Week 8 Reading & Resources

Assignment(s)

Week 8

Assignment

Evaluation

Grading:

Name	Grade %
Discussions	40.00 %
Welcome Discussion	5.71 %
Week 1 Discussion	5.71 %
Week 2 Discussion	5.71 %
Week 3 Discussion	5.71 %
Week 5 Discussion	5.71 %
Week 6 Discussion	5.71 %
Week 7 Discussion	5.71 %
Assignments	60.00 %
Week 2 Assignment	15.00 %
Week 4 Assignment	15.00 %
Week 8 Assignment	30.00 %

Materials

Course Guidelines

Citation and Reference Style

Students will follow MLA format as the sole citation and reference style used in written assignments submitted as part of coursework of the Philosophy Department.

Please note that no formal citation style is graded on Discussion assignments in the School of Arts & Humanities—only attribution of sources (please see details regarding Discussion communication below).

Tutoring

[Tutor.com](https://www.tutor.com) offers online homework help and learning resources by connecting students to certified tutors for one-on-one help. AMU and APU students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. Tutors are available 24/7 unless otherwise noted. Tutor.com also has a SkillCenter Resource Library offering educational resources, worksheets, videos, websites and career help. Accessing these resources does not count against tutoring hours and is also available 24/7. Please visit the APUS Library and search for 'Tutor' to create an account.

Turnitin

Assignments are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com within the course. Turnitin.com will analyze an assignment submission and report a similarity score. Your assignment submission is automatically processed through the assignments area of the course when you submit your work.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty incorporates more than plagiarism, which is using the work of others without citation. Academic dishonesty includes any use of content purchased or retrieved from web services such as CourseHero.com or Scribd. Additionally, allowing your work to be placed on such web services is academic dishonesty, as it is enabling the dishonesty of others. The copy and pasting of content from any web page, without citation as a direct quote, is academic dishonesty. When in doubt, do not copy/paste, and always cite.

Submission Guidelines

Some assignments may have very specific requirements for formatting (such as font, margins, etc) and submission file type (such as .docx, .pdf, etc). See the assignment instructions for details. In general, standard file types such as those associated with Microsoft Office are preferred, unless otherwise specified.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure the all submitted work can be accessed and opened by the instructor.

Disclaimer Statement

Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of a particular group or class.

Communicating on the Discussion

Discussions are the heart of the interaction in this course. The more engaged and lively the exchanges, the more interesting and fun the course will be. Only substantive comments will receive credit. Although there is a final posting day/time after which the instructor will grade and provide feedback, it is not sufficient to wait until the last day to contribute your comments/questions on the Discussion. The purpose of the Discussions is to actively participate in an on-going discussion about the assigned content.

"Substantive" means comments that contribute something new and important to the discussion. Thus a message that simply says "I agree" is not substantive. A substantive comment contributes a new idea or perspective, a good follow-up question to a point made, offers a response to a question, provides an example or illustration of a key point, points out an inconsistency in an argument, etc.

As a class, if we run into conflicting view points, we must respect each individual's own opinion. Hateful and hurtful comments towards other individuals, students, groups, peoples, and/or societies will not be tolerated.

Students must post a response to the weekly Discussions prompt and post the required number of replies

to other students – refer to the grading rubric and/or Discussion instructions for specific expectations on number of replies and word count requirements. The main response to the Discussion is due mid-week – refer to the grading rubric and/or Discussion instructions for specific expectations.

Late Policy

Students are expected to submit assignments by the due dates listed in the classroom. Late assignments, including but not limited to Assignments, Discussions, posts and responses, quizzes, and exams, may or may not be accepted after the course end date. Submitting an assignment after the due date may result in a penalty of up to 10% of the grade per day late, not to exceed a maximum 50% of the grade. The amount of the penalty is at the faculty member's discretion. Faculty recognize that students have limited time and may be more flexible if potential delays are communicated ahead of time.

*Doctoral and Programs with specialty accreditation may have different late policies.

**Students with DSA accommodations may have different late policies applied. For more information regarding our DSA services, please contact DSA@apus.edu.

- Instructors will periodically post information on the expectations of students and will provide feedback on assignments, Discussion posts, quizzes, and exams.
- Instructors will generally acknowledge student communications within 24 hours and respond within 48 hours, except in unusual circumstances (e.g., illness).
- The APUS standard for grading of all assessments (assignments, Discussions, quizzes, exams) is five days or fewer from the due date.
- Final course grades are submitted by faculty no later than seven days after the end date of the course or the end of the extension period.

Communications

Student Communication

To reach the instructor, please communicate through the MyClassroom email function accessible from the Classlist of the Course Tools menu, where the instructor and students email addresses are listed, or via the Office 365 tool on the Course homepage.

- In emails to instructors, it's important to note the specific course in which you are enrolled. The name of the course is at the top center of all pages.
- Students and instructors communicate in Discussion posts and other learning activities.
- All interactions should follow APUS guidelines, as noted in the Student Handbook, and maintain a professional, courteous tone.
- Students should review writing for spelling and grammar.
- Tips on Using the Office 365 Email Tool

Instructor Communication

The instructor will post announcements on communications preferences involving email and Instant Messaging and any changes in the class schedule or activities.

University Policies

Consult the Student Handbook for processes and policies at APUS. Notable policies:

- Drop/Withdrawal Policy
- Extension Requests
- Academic Probation
- Appeals
- Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism
- Disability Accommodations
- Student Deadlines
- Video Conference Policy

Mission

The mission of American Public University System is to provide high quality higher education with emphasis on educating the nation's military and public service communities by offering respected, relevant, accessible, affordable, and student-focused online programs that prepare students for service and leadership in a diverse, global society

Minimum Technology Requirements

- Please consult the catalog for the minimum hardware and software required for undergraduate and graduate courses.

- Although students are encouraged to use the [Pulse mobile app](#) with any course, please note that not all course work can be completed via a mobile device.

Disclaimers

- Please note that course content – and, thus, the syllabus – may change between when a student registers for a course and when the course starts.
- Course content may vary from the syllabus' schedule to meet the needs of a particular group.