

Introduction to Philosophical Problems

Syllabus - Spring 2025

Institution: Sichuan University - Pittsburgh Institute

Course Schedule: Mondays 7:20-9:55 pm

Location: The Building of Liberal Arts 101, Jiangnan Campus

Instructor Information

Name: Yixin Wei, 魏奕昕

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-4 pm, The Building of Liberal Arts 308, Wangjiang Campus (望江文科楼 308), or by appointment

Course Description

This course invites students to explore the fundamental questions of human existence, knowledge, morality, and reality through the lens of philosophical inquiry. We will examine key areas of philosophy, including metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, political philosophy, and aesthetics. Students will engage with the ideas of great philosophers and philosophical schools, learning to articulate their own beliefs, critically evaluate alternative viewpoints, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Through discussions and reflections, the course emphasizes the development of clear thinking, logical reasoning, and the ability to connect philosophical concepts to everyday life. By the end of the course, students will have gained not only an understanding of philosophy's rich history but also the tools to think deeply about their own values, beliefs, and place in the world.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and clarify philosophical arguments
2. Understand major positions in different fields of philosophy
3. Critically evaluate philosophical arguments
4. Reflect upon ordinary life through the lens of philosophy

Required Textbook

Solomon & Higgins. (2016). *The Big Questions* (10th Edition). Cengage Learning.

Course Website

All course materials and announcements will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Evaluation

- Participation: 20%
- Mid-term Exam: 35%
- Final Exam: 45%

Explanation for Grades

Participation refers to your active involvement in the class: raising questions, discussing relevant issues, being vocal, rather than merely sitting in the classroom. Philosophy grows with conversations. By getting actively involved, you are helping yourself and your classmates. You can speak in either English or Chinese. I will have a record of participants in each class.

Mid-term and final exams are closed-book, in-class exams. The format is short-essay questions. Six short-essay questions will be provided, and you will choose 4 out of 6. You should answer those questions in English. The mid-term covers the material for Week 1 to Week 7, the final covers Week 9 to Week 16.

Students with Disabilities

Students requiring accommodations should contact the instructor for further assistance.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism — the practice of intentionally or unintentionally using someone else's writing without properly acknowledging the source — WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

Course Schedule

The page numbers refer to our textbook, *The Big Questions*

- Week 1: General Introduction
- Week 2: What is knowledge? Part One (pp.140-152)
- Week 3: What is knowledge? Part Two (pp.152-180)
- Week 4: What is real? Part One (pp.103-125)
- Week 5: What is real? Part Two (pp. 125-139)
- Week 6: What is mind? (pp.181-203)
- Week 7: What is self? (pp.203-219)
- Week 8: Mid-term Exam
- Week 9: What is the foundation of morality? (pp.246-260)
- Week 10: What is the morally right thing to do? Part One (pp.261-271)
- Week 11: What is the morally right thing to do? Part Two (pp. 271-280)
- Week 12: Meaning of Life (pp.40-61)
- Week 13: Philosophy of Religion (pp.80-102)
- Week 14: Free Will and Responsibility (pp.231-245)
- Week 15: What is a good society? (pp.282-304)
- Week 16: What is beauty? (pp.322-342)
- Week 17: Final Exam

Note: This schedule is subject to change. Any modifications will be announced in class or posted on Blackboard.