

Syllabus  
**Introduction to Philosophy – PHIL 1301**

PHIL 1301    Online/Correspondence Instruction  
Instructor:    Dr. Steven J. Zani  
Texts: *Philosophy*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. – Wadsworth, Pub.  
Prerequisites: None

*Description:*

A study of major issues in philosophy and/or the work of major philosophical figures in philosophy. Topics in philosophy may include theories of reality, theories of knowledge, theories of value, and their practical applications.

*Additional Information about the course:*

The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the basics of the philosophical method, and how critical thinking applies to different ways of understanding the world. We will examine various methodologies for understanding the world, including science, history, morality, religion and art. Anyone who is willing to take the time to give thought and effort to this class will do very well and enjoy the experience very much. That last sentence, as you will discover during the semester, is not necessarily true. But it certainly is the kind of thing you expect to read on documents such as this one.

*Grading:*

Response Papers: 50%  
Midterm Exam – 25%  
Final Exam – 25%

*Response Papers:* In a normal semester with weekly class meetings/expectations, every week of class you would be responsible for turning in a Response paper. Therefore, plan appropriately for that work level. That is, no matter when you do it, the expectations of time you should devote to the class is equivalent to reading 20-30 pages of textbook for one week, every “week,” of the semester, and writing a Response Paper for each of those “weeks” assigned. The expectation is that these responses will be approximately 2-3 pages in length – at least two full pages, with no upper limit. In other words, I expect you to write at least two full pages, but you can write as much as you want. If you have access to a computer or word processor which enables you to type these, please do that, but I expect them to be handwritten, on plain typewriter paper or notebook paper. You can write in pen or pencil. Sign each page of your work. Your response will be better if you use some quotations from the text, as well as explanations or questions about what those quotations mean. You need to show me that you read the assignments, and that something directly from the assignment is part of what you are responding to, and it is more easy to do that if you write down a direct quote and discuss it. To repeat, these responses must demonstrate that you read the text and perceived and/or deliberated about some of the major issues within it. You will receive full credit (i.e. an “A”) for all response papers turned in, as long as they fulfill the requirements stated above. Each “week” will receive an individual grade, with that total grade being averaged and becoming the “50%” total

that you can see above in the Grade Distribution. You may ask, “What should I write in these responses?” There are many possibilities. For each “week” you will be given specific suggestions, but you can write MORE, or other things, if you want. For every “week” of lecture notes you will receive some prompts/suggestions, or questions, for what do write. You do have to answer any prompts that I give in the weekly assignment, but your Response can include more. You can, for example, tell me what interested you about the text, or what didn’t interest you. Explore themes. If you did not understand the text, pick some passages that you did not understand and attempt to explain them nonetheless. Or, pick only the few passages that you *did* understand and explain those. In short, your paper should address what you think about the work and why you think it. For doing that, you will receive full credit. The point is for you to engage with the work and try to generate a meaning from it without my direct input. The way to get an “A” in this class is to turn in all Response Papers and impress me that you are using them to think about the assignments in this class. There are Eleven Response Papers assigned this semester. I will “drop” one of them from the grade, meaning only ten of the eleven will count, which does allow you to “skip” writing one, if you wish.

*Midterm and Final Exams:* You will take two exams in the class, which will primarily consist of essay and short-answer questions. Keep in mind that there is a basic minimum of writing ability (grammar, clarity, spelling, etc.) required of all good communication. Unlike the Response Papers, you will be always be answering very specific, direct questions, and your grade will not depend upon expressing your opinion, but rather your ability to comprehend lessons and ideas from the text and lecture, and show that you have retained them and have the ability to repeat them.

*Policies and Strategies:*

1. *Drops:* If you are absent three times in a row, TDC rules state that you may be dropped; you will thereby sacrifice the opportunity to enroll in any college courses for one year. “Absence” in the context of online/correspondence instruction will consist of your lack of meeting at scheduled times with the program proctor.
2. *Cheating:* Academic Honesty is important in Education. Students caught cheating on exams/responses will be given an “F” for the class. It will not matter if you’re a hard-working student, or that you really do want to learn about Philosophy, or that [insert traumatic event here] has happened. Your own “Responses” and Exam-answers are just as likely to get your full credit from the class than anyone else, and if you’re taking/stealing someone else’s work I will probably recognize that fact very quickly anyway. In other words, don’t waste your time, please. Frankly, there is no *point* to cheating in this class – it’s harder to cheat successfully than it is just to do the work.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. read, analyze and critique philosophical texts;
2. demonstrate knowledge of key concepts, major arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.
3. present logically persuasive arguments in writing;
4. demonstrate critical thinking skills in evaluation and application of philosophical

concepts to various aspects of life;

5. evaluate the personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world.

### *Final Notes*

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please inform your TDCJ representative, and I will be able to address the issue.

Perhaps you are thinking “But Steve, it doesn’t seem fair that our grades will be based on your subjective interpretations of our papers and work.” Ahem, yes, “fair.” Be aware that in this class, as in every class, a professor’s policies are not fair so much as they are the very establishment of the “Fair” itself. My grading of you does not *follow* a law. It is that Law, a law sanctioned by the university and the prison unit. My judgment of your participation, however, will be accurate to the extent that it is founded on the flimsy piece of paper given to me by a PhD granting university, and my experience as a teacher.

### Class Schedule / Basic Outline

Introduction (The World Riddle / The Spirit of Inquiry) Pages 3-29

Predicament / Self Pages 77-105

Knowledge / Senses Pages 163-185

“99 Problems” Essay

Laws/Conscience / Ethics Pages 318-327 and 374-391

Lifestyles / Freedom Pages 333-345 and 257-265

Psyche Pages 221-229

Midterm Exam

Freud/Marx TWO HAND OUTS

Life Pages 401-423

History Pages 291-311

Hagakure selections HAND OUT

Death/Immortality Pages 621-635

Final Exam

# Where A Philosophy Degree Gets You In Real Life

