



**PHL 301: Introduction to Philosophy**

*Texas Common Number: PHIL 1301*

**Course Format:** Online, Self-Paced

**Course Instructor:** Bryan Register, Ph.D. Contact using the Inbox tool in Canvas.

**Course Credits:** 3

**Prerequisites:** None.

**How This Course Works:**

This course is online and is self-paced. Exams must be taken in-person at an approved testing center. More information about taking exams is available on the University Extension website.

Students have five months from their date of enrollment in which to complete all coursework. While this course is self-paced in terms of when you complete the work and submit assignments, periodic assessments are critical to ensuring that students receive adequate support and are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Thus, this course is organized into modules that must be completed in order. Students will only be able to move forward once they have received a grade on all assessments within a given module.

Review the course outline and assignment descriptions carefully. Computer-graded assignments are scored immediately. You can expect to receive feedback on instructor-graded assignments within three business days following submission. This does not include weekends or holidays. Requests for expedited grading will be ignored, so please plan accordingly. During certain times (end of semester, spring break, etc.), instructors may experience higher-than-usual demands on their time and may need additional time for evaluation. Students should reach out to University Extension at [uex@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:uex@austin.utexas.edu) with any concerns regarding grading turnaround.

If all other coursework is complete and you have requested the final exam through the course exam manager by your designated completion date, an additional 30 days will be provided for you to study for and take that exam. If the final exam has not been requested by your completion date, you will be dropped from the course.

University Extension strongly advises students to be aware of when they may need a course grade to be recorded on their transcript. It can take up to two weeks after the final exam is complete for a grade to be officially recorded with the Office of the Registrar.

**Course Overview:**

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to philosophy as it has been done historically and as it is done today. Moreover, for those who do well in the course, it should be a preparation for taking more advanced courses in philosophy without impediment. Hence this course may be looked upon as a way to “get one’s feet wet” in philosophy.

Philosophy is valuable in that it promotes (1) independent thinking; (2) critical reading skills; (3) analytical skills; and (4) the ability to think abstractly. Obviously, each of these skills is highly valued in today’s demanding and highly competitive job market. Some of these skills can enhance one’s performance on such standardized tests as the GRE or LSAT. Additionally, this course may be of value to you because it encourages concise writing skills that will benefit you in an ability to express yourself more clearly, accurately, and thoughtfully.

Finally, philosophy is a journey of wonder and a tradition of learning that is valuable in itself. Many of the primary readings in the text are also great literature—well written and inspiring. I hope that you find the process of engaging in philosophy worthwhile in its own right.

**Required Materials:**

Required Text: Solomon, Robert C., Higgins, Kathleen M., and Martin, Clancy. *Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings, 10th ed.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN-13: 978-0-19-976486-0; ISBN-10: 0-1997-6486-7.

**Course Organization:**

Philosophy 301 consists of ten lessons organized into four learning modules. Each lesson contains a reading assignment, a commentary from the instructor, an ungraded self-assessment, and a computer-graded assignment. Most modules also conclude with an instructor-graded assignment. You must receive a grade on all assignments in a module before the next module will open.

***Computer-Graded Assignments***

Each lesson has a computer-graded assignment consisting of 10–20 multiple choice questions. Computer-graded assignments may only be taken once and they are graded instantly by the course system.

***Instructor-Graded Assignments***

For the instructor-graded assignments, you will be asked to write essays of roughly 750–1000 words. You will be given a list of topics to choose from for each essay. There are some differences in the purposes of these essays. The lesson four essay will ask you to write an essay from a list of topics. Along with my grading of this essay, I shall give you comments designed to help you write better, make better arguments, or both. In lesson six, you will rewrite your lesson four essay, taking great care to address the issues I have raised in my comments on that essay. In lesson eight, you will write an essay based on the insights gained from writing the first two essays. Before you write your first essay, you should read my short explanation detailing what I expect, in general, to be contained in a philosophical essay. It shall also include an explanation of how I evaluate essays.

### Exams

This course requires you to complete a midterm exam and a final exam. Both exams contain multiple choice and essay questions, and both must be taken in a proctored testing center. The midterm covers lessons 1–6 and the final covers all lessons.

**You must pass the final exam to pass the course.**

### Course Outline:

Module	Topics	Assessments
1	Lesson 1: Philosophy, Reasoning, and Argumentation	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 1
	Lesson 2: Metaphysics I: The Nature of Reality	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 2
	Lesson 3: Metaphysics II: Freedom and Determinism	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 3
	Lesson 4: Metaphysics III: Self-Identity and the Mind/Body Problem	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 4 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 5
2	Lesson 5: Epistemology I: Rationalism	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 6
	Lesson 6: Epistemology II: Empiricism	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 7 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 8
MIDTERM EXAM		
3	Lesson 7: Ethics I: The Will of God, Conscience, Virtue, and Sentiment	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 9
	Lesson 8: Ethics II: Duty and Utility	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 10 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 11
4	Lesson 9: Philosophy of Religion I: Proofs for the Existence of God	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 12
	Lesson 10: Philosophy of Religion II: The Problem of Evil	▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 13
FINAL EXAM		

### Grade Calculation:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

10 Computer-Graded Assignments	25%
3 Instructor-Graded Assignments	25%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

**You must pass the final exam to pass the course.** You must also earn an overall passing grade:

A 100-93% B+ 89-87% C+ 79-77% D+ 69-67% F 59-0%  
A- 92-90% B 86-83% C 76-73% D 66-63%  
B- 82-80% C- 72-70% D- 62-60%

### Getting Help

- Technical Support: [uextechsupport@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:uextechsupport@austin.utexas.edu)
- For content questions or questions about assignment and grades, use the Inbox tool within Canvas to contact the course instructor.
- For other questions (registration, exam proctoring, transcripts, etc.), contact University Extension.

### University Extension Policies

Full University Extension policies for self-paced courses may be found on the University Extension website.

### Scholastic Dishonesty

Students in this course are expected to work independently, without direct supervision, and to conduct themselves responsibly in accordance with that freedom. To obtain the greatest benefit from their course work, and for the sake of everyone enrolled in our courses, students must demonstrate the willingness to exercise self-discipline, personal responsibility, and scholastic integrity.

We expect the course work and exams that you submit for course credit to be yours and yours alone. Plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty are serious academic violations that will not be tolerated. The penalties for scholastic dishonesty include the possibility of failure in the course. Scholastic dishonesty in examinations will automatically result in a grade of *F* on the exam and an *F* in the course.

### University Extension Contact Information

[uex@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:uex@austin.utexas.edu)

512-471-2900