

# PHILOSOPHY

FALL 2025 | PHI 101

## Aspasia & Socrates

Wisdom Is the New Black

**Fight the Patriarchy!**

Nicole Dular on  
Ghosting as Resistance

**Gaslighting**

An Analysis by  
Kate Abramson

**Effective Altruism  
or Mutual Aid**  
Savannah Pearlman  
Considers the  
Arguments

**Becoming a  
Vampire?**  
L. A. Paul's  
Reflections

**Course Grades  
Are Total BS**  
Jesse Stommel  
Says Ditch Them

# Introduction to Philosophy

**Time** Mon, Wed, Fri: 10:00AM–10:50AM  
**Location** Clemens Hall 17  
**Instruction Mode** LEC (Lecture) and P (In Person)  
**Credits** 3.00

**Instructor** Professor David Emmanuel Gray  
**Contact** 📍 Park Hall 118, ✉️ [degray@buffalo.edu](mailto:degray@buffalo.edu)  
**Student Meetings** Tue, Thu: 12:00PM–2:00PM, or by appointment

**Teaching Assistant** Katie Johnson, 📍 Park Hall 157, ✉️ [kejohnso@buffalo.edu](mailto:kejohnso@buffalo.edu)

## Overview

### Description

This course takes its inspiration from Socrates, who said that his primary task as a philosopher was to relentlessly push his fellow citizens to better themselves and their society. So throughout the course, you will not merely learn about philosophy, but you will also actively practice it as a force for social good in our communities.

### Purposes & Learning Outcomes

The primary purpose of this course is to introduce you to the field of philosophy and some of its practical applications. In addition, you will learn (I hope!) more about yourself and your place in the world.

To help guide us, this course has seven learning outcomes. By the end of this course, you will be able to...

1. Identify and employ common terminology in philosophy.
2. Explain and summarize arguments within philosophical texts.
3. Apply important philosophy concepts and theories to various hypothetical and real-world situations.
4. Assess competing claims concerning what you should believe and how you ought to behave.
5. Connect philosophy with your own lived experiences.
6. Put philosophy into action.
7. Reflect on your own assumptions and form more considered judgments on how you may address social issues.

In addition, this course also has a secondary purpose of assisting in your professional development, preparing you for life after graduation.

I have designed all course activities (see page 2) with these purposes and learning outcomes in mind.

### Learning Resources

There are no textbooks to buy for this course. I have posted all the readings on the course website. I expect you to read that material according to the class schedule (on pages 5–11).

The course website will also have activity instructions and other materials, along with any updates to our schedule

### Announcements & Other Communication

I will email important information to you throughout the semester, so routinely check your UB email for updates. Otherwise, I will gladly answer your questions, discuss your work, or respond to your concerns. Please visit me during my student meeting hours or reach out to me via email.

*In designing this course, I have drawn on a wealth of material. Of special note is the work of Ramona Ilea and Monica Janzen on "Experiments in Ethics", which has directly influenced the "Experiments in Philosophy" for this course. See their website on Engaged Philosophy (<https://www.engagedphilosophy.com>) for more.*

### Grading

As you complete these course activities (see page 2), you will earn philosophy experience points:

Activity	Points Available
Social Annotation	2,600
Group Discussion	≈5,000*
Professional Development	2,200
Experiments in Philosophy	7,800
Final Presentation	1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,100</b>

*\*This is only approximate. The actual total for class participation may vary. If this adversely influences course grades, then the table below for determining letter grades will be updated accordingly.*

You have entered this class as a New Philosophy Student, but as you do these activities and earn philosophy experience points you will advance to higher levels. The level at which you end the semester will determine your final letter grade in the course:

Points Earned	Level	Title	Letter Grade
Less than 8,100	1	New Philosophy Student	F
8,100 to 8,899	2	Philosophy Student	D <sup>-</sup>
8,900 to 9,699	3	Philosophy Initiate	D
9,700 to 10,599	4	Novice Philosopher	D <sup>+</sup>
10,600 to 11,499	5	Apprentice Philosopher	C <sup>-</sup>
11,500 to 12,399	6	Unemployed Philosopher	C
12,400 to 13,299	7	Armchair Philosopher	C <sup>+</sup>
13,300 to 14,299	8	Stand-Up Philosopher	B <sup>-</sup>
14,300 to 15,299	9	Assist. Philosophy Professor	B
15,300 to 16,299	10	Assoc. Philosophy Professor	B <sup>+</sup>
16,300 to 17,399	11	Philosophy Professor	A <sup>-</sup>
17,400 to 18,499	12	Philosopher Royale	A
18,500 or higher	13	Philosopher Supreme	A <sup>+</sup>

*Please note that UB does not allow final course grades to be an A<sup>+</sup> or a D<sup>-</sup>. Therefore a final course grade of an A<sup>+</sup> will be assigned an A and a final grade of a D<sup>-</sup> will be assigned a D.*

This philosophy experience point structure means that you are free to choose some activities and skip others. You are also free to decide how much you want to engage in the course.

Some students will reach the level of Unemployed Philosopher and then vanish. Fair enough! Others will not relent until they are Philosopher Supreme. Great—go for it! In the end, I will support whatever choice you make.

---

# Activities

## Participation & Attendance

This course is based on the principle of experiential learning, where you learn not only from me but also from your discussions and interactions with your classmates. Indeed, like any activity, you get better at philosophy the more you actually *do* it. Therefore, we will work both in and out of class doing many different activities. This means that the quality of the course depends critically on your individual attention and participation. The purpose of us coming together as a class is to learn, practice, and apply philosophy together as a group.

Our class meetings will typically follow an interactive lecture format, with time set aside for group activities. This gives you the chance to actively practice philosophy, rather than passively absorb what others may say about it. To help keep you engaged, I will do my best to make our class meetings worthwhile and time well spent. I will also take special care to create an environment where you feel comfortable asking questions and expressing your own views. To get the most out of our class meetings, please *do not confuse this cooperative style of learning with mere conversation or informal, organized chatting*.

This is why I expect that you will **show up on time to our class meetings**, prepared to take notes, pay close attention to what we are covering, ask questions when confused, positively work with your partners during in-class activities, and, by the end of class, grasp what we accomplished that day.

I also highly encourage you to **find yourself a notes buddy**. That is, you are encouraged to exchange university email addresses with at least one other person in class. That way, if you miss something covered during a class meeting, you can contact your notes buddy and catch up on any material that you might have missed. In short, **if you miss class or are late to class, for any reason, contact your notes buddy**.

### What If You Miss a Class Meeting?

Missing an in-class activity, such as a group discussion, under any circumstances does not excuse you from that activity. However, keep in mind that a philosopher's stone (see page 12) may be used for make up for certain in-class activities. (If you are uncertain about whether a stone may be used for a specific activity, please do not hesitate to ask.) So occasionally missing a class meeting may not have significant impact on your final course grade.

In any case, if you miss a class meeting for a reason that is excused according to the university attendance policy (on page 14), you may have the opportunity to complete a make-up activity. The nature of this opportunity will depend on the precise class meeting missed, as some in-class activities are unique without any meaningful equivalent. However, even if the absence is excused, you must reach out to me via email with your documented excuse within 72 hours of the absence. Otherwise, you will not be allowed to make up the missed activity.

## Group Discussion

Time is set aside during every class meeting for you to engage in discussions with your classmates, either in small groups or with all of us together as a class. For every group discussion, your group as a whole is assessed together, based on overall completeness and collective effort. Unless you are told otherwise, each class meeting will have at least 80 philosophy experience points worth of discussions and activities. (Days with guest speakers count triple, for 240 points.) These points are meant to be easily earned if you show up on time, pay attention, remain in the classroom, stay on topic, and do your part.

## Social Annotation

Readings are assigned most weeks, which you are expected to have read and thought about according to the class schedule (on pages 5–11). This allows us to spend our class meetings discussing and applying those texts rather than merely review their contents. Hence, you must do more than merely peruse the readings: you must endeavor to understand what they are trying to convey.

To assist you with in that process, you will work with your classmates on Perusall to collaboratively annotate the readings. Unless you are told otherwise, for each of the social annotation activities, make at least 4 annotations to the reading. Your annotations for a reading are due the Sunday *after* we have talked about that reading in class, so you should have plenty to talk about in your annotations!

Substantive responses to the annotations of your classmates will count as annotations of your own. Indeed, this is meant to be a real social experience for us, so **I would strongly prefer that at least half of your annotations are in response to those of a classmate**. Remember, though, be respectful of each other—the purpose of these annotations is for us to think about the readings together while also learning from each other.

## Professional Development

Throughout the semester, you will be assigned professional development tasks. The purpose of these tasks is to prepare for your life after graduation while also encouraging you to better understand how the ideas and skills you are learning in this class may prove useful for your future careers.

## Experiments in Philosophy

You will also be doing several experiments in philosophy (see pages 3–4 for more details about these). The overarching goal of all these experiments is to help you connect philosophy to the real world and your own experiences to philosophy.

**Without a doubt, these are the most amazing part of the course!**

Most experiments will be followed up with a reflection activity and, if appropriate, documentation of what you did. I will give you more specific requirements as the due dates approach. If you feel anxious about any experiment guidelines—let me know so I can better clarify them.

Please note that some experiments in philosophy ask for you to interact with your world and community. However, please do so only in a way that is **SAFE** and **COMFORTABLE** to **YOU**. You get to choose how you will complete these experiments. Please do not hesitate to meet with me if you are encountering difficulties in completing them.

## Final Presentation

The most important experiment in philosophy that you will do this semester is organizing an activity, large or small, that tries to make the world better in some tangible way. For that activity, you will have to put together a one-minute Pitch-Your-Success video that showcases your activity and its impact. Then, during finals week, you will do a short (two-minute) oral presentation where you reflect on your activity and present your Pitch-Your-Success video to me and your classmates. (That two minutes does include the time for your video, so plan your presentation accordingly.)

# Experiments in Philosophy (Summary)

Experiment & Due Date	Task	Student Examples	Purpose
<b>Civic Action</b> September 4. Total Points: 500.	Call one of your elected political representatives about an issue that you care about.	Calling a senator about a bill impacting the LGBTQ+ community. Calling a congressional representative to thank that representative for their stance on immigration. Calling the mayor to address the lack of blizzard preparedness for the city.	Identify an issue that you care about. Practice taking a stance on something and presenting a short argument in defense of it. Develop your abilities for professional communication and civic engagement.
<b>Community Issue Mapping</b> September 24 (in class). Total Points: 250.	Brainstorm a variety of local issues that personally affect you. Identify the specific people who can do something about those issues.	Identifying a concern with wasted electricity from the lights in the university library never turning off and learning that it may be addressed by the relevant person in facilities.	Identify several issues that you care about. Determine exactly who is in position to do something about those issues.
<b>Charitable Giving Investigation</b> Research: October 6 (in class). Advocacy: October 8 (in class). Reflection: October 8 (in class). Total Points: 500.	Research and compare different charities. Present the results of that research. Give an argument for where \$200 of my (Professor Gray's) money should be donated.	Researching the impact of a donation to Médecins Sans Frontières (i.e., Doctors Without Borders). Comparing the impact of a \$200 donation to the Children's Cancer Research Fund with a \$200 donation to the University at Buffalo's UB Fund. Justifying why Kids Wish Network should receive the \$200 donation.	Research how different charities spend the cash donations they receive. Compare the impact of different charitable organizations. Advocate for an impactful charity to receive a cash donation.
<b>Change Making Letter</b> Draft: October 7. Peer Review: October 10 (in class). Final Letter: October 15. Mailed: October 17 (in class). Total Points: 1,700.	Identify an issue that personally affects you. Identify a specific person who can do something about that issue. Write a letter making an argument for the change that needs to be made.	Emailing the head of the campus cafeteria asking for more vegan options. Writing to a parent's doctor asking to stop prescribing painkillers for the parent. Writing to a former high school principal suggesting equitable dress code policy.	Develop your skills for persuasive argumentation. Apply normative analysis to issues in your own life. Reflect on actions that may lead to positive social, political, or communal change.
<b>Parable of the Polygons</b> October 27 (in class). Total Points: 250.	Complete an online activity modeling the emergence of segregation in neighborhoods.	"I was surprised that even a small demand for diversity may desegregate a neighborhood."	Discover how seemingly harmless choices can lead to injustice. Reflect on what may be done to avoid such injustice.

# Experiments in Philosophy (Summary Continued)

Experiment & Due Date	Task	Student Examples	Purpose
<b>Volunteer Activity</b> Report: December 8. Total Points: 1,000.	Identify organizations that make changes. Volunteer at least 4 hours. Provide documentation of actions and write a reflection connecting your actions to course materials.	Packing food at the local food bank. Gathering signatures for a petition initiated by a non-profit. Planting trees with a local group. Donating blood. Volunteering at a place of worship. Walking dogs at animal shelters. Registering people to vote.	Differentiate between the impact of volunteering for an organization (charitable action) and that of organizing an activity of your own (justice-focused action). Connect local events to the activity of philosophy. Reflect on how your actions may directly contribute to tangible positive change in our communities.
<b>Organize an Activity</b> Report: December 10. Video: December 10. Total Points: 2,500.	Identify an issue. Organize an action to make a positive change. Provide documentation of actions and write a reflection connecting actions to course materials. Give tips for next semester's students. Create a one-minute Pitch-Your-Success video.	Organizing a walk to benefit an organization helping those struggling with eating disorders. Organizing a campaign for more healthy food options on campus. Organizing shoe collection for a local organization benefiting people experiencing homelessness. Organizing a vegan cooking night. Organizing a CPR class for the campus community	Differentiate between the impact of volunteering for an organization (charitable action) and that of organizing an activity of your own (justice focused action). Engage with others by presenting arguments and thinking of counterarguments. Exercise your own agency as you design and implement your activity. Reflect on how your actions may directly contribute to tangible positive change in our communities.
<b>Civic Engagement Activity</b> Report: December 12. Total Points: 600.	Attend at least 4 different UB Votes events hosted by UB Civic Engagement.	Attending the Experience UB Fair. Participating in a civic engagement workshop on voter registration. Attending a candidate forum/debate. Participating in UB's Election Day Celebration. Attending a post-election analysis event.	Foster civic responsibility and awareness by reflecting on your role within a democratic society. Exercise critical thinking by considering diverse perspectives and refining your ability to analyze complex societal issues. Build social connections by engaging with various community partners.
<b>Letter to Future Students</b> December 17. Total Points: 500.	Reflect on the objectives for the experiments in philosophy. Write a letter, drawing on any relevant class materials discussing the pros and cons of the assignment.	"After taking this course, I have a more positive outlook on volunteering and charity as whole. I see just how truly accessible change is to an individual, and that gives me hope for the future of the world."	Make connections across course content. Reflect on the value of purpose of the various experiments in philosophy taken all together.

# Schedule

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
1	8/25 (Mon)	<b>What Have I Gotten Myself Into?</b> (Topic #1) Read: Gray, D. E. (2025, Fall). <i>PHI 101LEC GRA: Introduction to philosophy</i> [Syllabus]. Department of Philosophy, University at Buffalo.	
	8/27 (Wed)	<b>What Have I Gotten Myself Into?</b> No new reading.	
	8/28 (Thu)		📄 <b>Professional photo &amp; Handshake profile due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b>
	8/29 (Fri)	<b>What Is Philosophy?</b> (Topic #2) Read: Plato. (2000). <i>Apology</i> . In J. M. Cooper (Ed.), G. M. A. Grube (Trans.), <i>The trial and death of Socrates</i> (3rd ed., pp. 20–42). Hackett. (Original work from ca. 380 B.C.E.)	
2	8/31 (Sun)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✅ <b>Introductory survey due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b></li> <li>✅ <b>Honor agreement due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b></li> <li>📝 <b>What have I gotten myself into? due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b></li> </ul>
9/1 (Mon)	<b>🔧 Labor Day 🔧</b>		
9/3 (Wed)	<b>Civic Action</b> No new reading.		
9/4 (Thu)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>📝 <b>Civic action due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b></li> <li>📄 <b>Online profiles due by 11:59PM (midnight).</b></li> </ul>
9/5 (Fri)	<b>Guest Speakers: Volunteering at UB</b> Alivia Vo-Coyne, Coordinator for Community & Civic Engagement, Student Engagement, University at Buffalo. Reid Collins, Graduate Assistant, Community & Civic Engagement, Student Engagement, University at Buffalo.		
9/6 (Sat)			<b>9/11 Day of Service from 9:00AM to 1:00PM (counts as 3 hours towards the volunteer activity).</b>

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity.**

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
3	9/7 (Sun)		What is philosophy? due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/8 (Mon)	<b>What Is an Argument?</b> (Topic #3) Read: Harrell, M. (2016). <i>What is the argument? An introduction to philosophical argument and analysis</i> . MIT Press..	
	9/10 (Wed)	<b>Guest Speaker: Civic Engagement at UB</b> R.J. Haq, Assistant Director of Civic Engagement, Student Engagement, University at Buffalo.	
	9/11 (Thu)		Digital challenge cards due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/12 (Fri)	<b>What Is an Argument?</b> No new reading.	
4	9/14 (Sun)		What is an argument? due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/15 (Mon)	<b>How Do I Assess an Argument?</b> (Topic #4) Read: Dular, N. (2021). Boy bye: A feminist defense of ghosting. In B. Fischer (Ed.), <i>College ethics: A reader on moral issues that affect you</i> (2nd ed., pp. 67–81). Oxford University Press.	
	9/17 (Wed)	<b>How Do I Assess an Argument?</b> No new reading.	
	9/18 (Thu)		<b>Experience UB Fair</b> from 11:00AM to 2:00PM (counts as 1 event for the civic engagement activity).
	9/19 (Fri)	<b>Exploring Activity Ideas</b> No new reading.	
5	9/21 (Sun)		How do I assess an argument? due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/22 (Mon)	<b>How Do I Speak Truth to Power?</b> (Topic #5) Read: King, M. L., Jr. (2000). Letter from Birmingham Jail. In <i>Why we can't wait</i> (pp. 85–112). Signet Classics. (Original work from April 16, 1963)	
	9/24 (Wed)	<b>How Do I Speak Truth to Power?</b> No new reading.	Community issue mapping due in class.
	9/25 (Thu)		Online profile review due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/26 (Fri)	<b>Beginning Your Change Making Letter</b> No new reading.	

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity.**

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

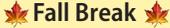
wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
6	9/28 (Sun)		<b>How do I speak truth to power?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	9/29 (Mon)	<b>What's the Problem With Gaslighting? (Topic #6)</b> Read: Abramson, K. (2014, December). Turning up the lights on gaslighting. <i>Philosophical Perspectives</i> , 28(1), 1–30. Optional: Jamison, L. (2024, April 1). So you think you've been gaslit. <i>The New Yorker</i> . <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/04/08/so-you-think-youve-been-gaslit">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/04/08/so-you-think-youve-been-gaslit</a> Optional: Holway, H. (2020, December 2). Beyond the final girl: The Invisible Man and the horror of gaslighting. <i>Talk Film Society</i> . <a href="https://talkfilmsociety.com/columns/beyond-the-final-girl-the-invisible-man-and-the-horror-of-gaslighting">https://talkfilmsociety.com/columns/beyond-the-final-girl-the-invisible-man-and-the-horror-of-gaslighting</a>	
	9/30 (Tue)		<b>Making professional connections</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/1 (Wed)	<b>Guest Speaker: Informational Interviews</b> Carl Remmes, Career Design Consultant, Career Design Center, University at Buffalo.	
	10/3 (Fri)	<b>What's the Problem With Gaslighting?</b> No new reading.	
7	10/5 (Sun)		<b>Midterm course review</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight). <b>What's the problem with gaslighting?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/6 (Mon)	<b>How Should I Make a Difference? (Topic #7)</b> Read: MacAskill, W. (2015). <i>Doing good better: How effective altruism can help you make a difference</i> . Avery. Optional: Lewis-Kraus, G. (2022, August 8). The reluctant prophet of effective altruism. <i>The New Yorker</i> . <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/08/15/the-reluctant-prophet-of-effective-altruism">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/08/15/the-reluctant-prophet-of-effective-altruism</a>	<b>Charitable giving investigation: research</b> due in class.
	10/7 (Tue)		<b>Change making letter draft</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/8 (Wed)	<b>How Should I Make a Difference?</b> No new reading.	<b>Charitable giving investigation: advocacy</b> due in class. <b>Charitable giving investigation: reflection</b> due in class.
	10/9 (Thu)		<b>Civic Engagement Workshop: Voter Registration</b> from 5:00PM to 6:00PM (COUNTS as 1 event for the civic engagement activity). <b>Informational interview scheduled</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/10 (Fri)	<b>Peer Review of Change Making Letters</b> No new reading.	<b>Change making letter peer review</b> due in class.

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity**.

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
8	10/12 (Sun)		 <b>How should I make a difference?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/13 (Mon)	 <b>Fall Break</b> 	
	10/15 (Wed)	<b>Organizing an Activity Discussion</b> No new reading.	 <b>Final change making letter</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/17 (Fri)	<b>Mailing Your Change Making Letters</b> No new reading.	 <b>Change making letter mailed</b> due in class.  <b>Change making letter short reflection</b> due in class.
	10/18 (Sat)		<b>Community Day</b> from 9:00AM to 1:00PM (counts as 3 hours towards the <b>volunteer activity</b> ).
9	10/20 (Mon)	<b>How Can We Improve Our Communities?</b> (Topic #8) Read: Pearlman, S. (2022, June 23). <i>In tension: Effective altruism and mutual aid</i> . Blog of the American Philosophical Association (APA). <a href="https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/06/23/in-tension-effective-altruism-and-mutual-aid/">https://blog.apaonline.org/2022/06/23/in-tension-effective-altruism-and-mutual-aid/</a>	
	10/21 (Tue)		 <b>Informational interview report</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/22 (Wed)	<b>Guest Speaker: Informational Interviews Debrief</b> Carl Remmes, Career Design Consultant, Career Design Center, University at Buffalo.	
	10/23 (Thu)		<b>UB Votes Candidate Forum: Amherst Town Supervisor</b> from 6:00PM to 7:30PM (counts as 1 event for the <b>civic engagement activity</b> ).
	10/24 (Fri)	<b>How Can We Improve Our Communities?</b> Read: Gammage, J. (2021, January 25). <i>Solidarity, not charity: Mutual aid's an-archic history</i> . Blog of the American Philosophical Association (APA). <a href="https://blog.apaonline.org/2021/01/25/solidarity-not-charity-mutual-aids-an-archic-history/">https://blog.apaonline.org/2021/01/25/solidarity-not-charity-mutual-aids-an-archic-history/</a>	<b>Cause Connection</b> from 12:00PM to 2:00PM (counts up to 2 hours towards the <b>volunteer activity</b> , depending on how long you stay and participate).

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity**.

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
10	10/26 (Sun)		 <b>How can we improve our communities?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	10/27 (Mon)	<b>How Do We Address Structural Injustice?</b> (Topic #9) Read: Young, I. M. (2011). Structure as the subject of justice. In <i>Responsibility for justice</i> (pp. 43–74). Oxford University Press.	 <b>Parable of the polygons</b> due in class.
	10/29 (Wed)	<b>How Do We Address Structural Injustice?</b> No new reading.	
	10/31 (Fri)	<b>How Do We Address Structural Injustice?</b> No new reading.	
11	11/2 (Sun)		 <b>How do we address structural injustice?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	11/3 (Mon)	<b>Will I Recognize Myself in 10 Years?</b> (Topic #10) Read: Paul, L. A. (2014). <i>Transformative experience</i> . Oxford University Press. <i>Optional:</i> Rothman, J. (2013, April 23). The impossible decision. <i>The New Yorker</i> . <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-impossible-decision">https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-impossible-decision</a> <i>Optional:</i> Gregory, A. (2024, December 2). The philosopher L. A. Paul wants us to think about our selves. <i>The New Yorker</i> . <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/12/09/the-philosopher-l-a-paul-wants-us-to-think-about-our-selves">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2024/12/09/the-philosopher-l-a-paul-wants-us-to-think-about-our-selves</a>	
	11/4 (Tue)		<b>Election Day Bash</b> from 11:00AM to 5:00PM (counts as 1 event for the <b>civic engagement activity</b> ).
	11/5 (Wed)	<b>Will I Recognize Myself in 10 Years?</b> No new reading.	
	11/7 (Fri)	<b>Guest Speaker: Designing Your Life</b> Carl Remmes, Career Design Consultant, Career Design Center, University at Buffalo.	 <b>Design your life</b> due in class.
	11/8 (Sat)		<b>Veteran's Day of Service</b> from 9:00AM to 1:00PM (counts as 3 hours towards the <b>volunteer activity</b> ).

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity**.

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
12	11/9 (Sun)		 <b>Will I recognize myself in 10 years?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	11/10 (Mon)	<p><b>How Do I Find Meaning in My Work?</b> (Topic #11)</p> <p>Read: Veltman, A. (2018). What makes work meaningful? <i>The Philosophers' Magazine</i>, 81, 78–83.</p> <p>Read: Graeber, D. (2013, August). On the phenomenon of bullshit jobs: A work rant. <i>STRIKE! Magazine</i>, 3.</p> <p>Optional: Heller, N. (2018, June 7). The Bullshit-Job Boom. <i>The New Yorker</i>. <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/the-bullshit-job-boom">https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/the-bullshit-job-boom</a></p>	
	11/12 (Wed)	<p><b>Guest Speaker</b></p> <p>Carl Remmes, Career Design Consultant, Career Design Center, University at Buffalo.</p>	
	11/13 (Thu)		<b>After the Ballots: Post-Election Analysis</b> from 6:00PM to 8:00PM (counts as 1 event for the <b>civic engagement activity</b> ).
	11/14 (Fri)	<p><b>Guest Speaker</b></p> <p>Carl Remmes, Career Design Consultant, Career Design Center, University at Buffalo.</p>	
13	11/16 (Sun)		 <b>How do I find meaning in my work?</b> due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	11/17 (Mon)	<p><b>Are Grades BS?</b> (Topic #12)</p> <p>Read: Frankfurt, H. G. (1988). On bullshit. In <i>The importance of what we care about: Philosophical essays</i> (pp. 117–133). Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Optional: Holt, J. (2005, August 14). Say anything. <i>The New Yorker</i>. <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/08/22/say-anything">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/08/22/say-anything</a></p>	
	11/19 (Wed)	<p><b>Are Grades BS?</b></p> <p>Read: Stommel, J. (2018, March 11). <i>How to ungrade</i>. Jesse Stommel. <a href="https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/">https://www.jessestommel.com/how-to-ungrade/</a></p>	
	11/20 (Thu)		<b>Civic Engagement Workshop: Coalition-Building</b> from 5:00PM to 6:00PM (counts as 1 event for the <b>civic engagement activity</b> ).
	11/21 (Fri)	<p><b>Are Grades BS?</b></p> <p>No new reading.</p>	

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity**.

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

# Schedule (Continued)

wk	Date	Topics & Readings	Activities
14	11/23 (Sun)		Are grades BS? due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	11/24 (Mon)	<b>Volunteer Activity &amp; Organizing an Activity Planning</b> No new reading.	
	11/26, 28	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
15	12/1 (Mon)	<b>What Is Philosophy, Again?</b> (Topic #13) Read: Plato. (2004). [The allegory of the cave]. In C. D. Reeve (Trans.), <i>Republic</i> (pp. 208–212). Hackett. (Original work from ca. 380 B.C.E.)	
	12/3 (Wed)	<b>What Is Philosophy, Again?</b> Read: Morton, J. M. (2015). An antidote to injustice. <i>The Philosophers' Magazine</i> , 69, 65–70.	
	12/5 (Fri)	<b>Pitching Your Success</b> No new reading.	Cause Connection from 12:00PM to 2:00PM (counts up to 2 hours towards the <b>volunteer activity</b> , depending on how long you stay and participate).
16	12/7 (Sun)		What is philosophy, again? due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	12/8 (Mon)	<b>Putting It All Together</b> No new reading.	Volunteer activity report due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	12/9 (Tue)		Official UB course evaluations due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	12/10 (Wed)		Organize an activity report due by 11:59PM (midnight). Pitch-Your-Success video due by 11:59PM (midnight).
	12/12 (Fri)		Civic engagement activity report due by 11:59PM (midnight).
17	12/15 (Mon)	<b>Final Presentations from 8:00AM to 11:00AM</b>	Final presentations due in class.
	12/17 (Wed)		Letter to future students due by 11:59PM (midnight).

All times are Buffalo (Eastern Standard) Time.

Do not forget that **every class meeting will have some sort of group discussion activity.**

**Optional Material:** Any items in the schedule marked optional are just that. While I may discuss optional material during class, *you are not required* to have done them. Even so, I provide these items in case you are curious to learn more about these topics. Any activities related to optional material will only assume that you were present in class if/when they were discussed.

---

# Policies

## Late Work

Classes become quite overwhelming when deadlines are missed. In such situations, it is easy for work—and anxiety!—to pile up. This is why I expect that your activities are done on time.

That said, there may be times when you cannot get things done as expected. If that happens, **do not panic!** Philosopher's stones are there to help. If the situation is truly extraordinary, please do see me about a reasonable accommodation.

## Reasonable Accommodations

You are a human being with all the usual challenges associated with human finitude. Illness, family emergencies, job interviews, other professors, and so on will inevitably lead to legitimate conflicts over your time. If you expect that you will be unable to complete a course activity on time, please notify me as soon as possible and we can agree on a reasonable accommodation.

Please recognize that most reasonable accommodations will require that you use philosopher's stones or do additional work. This is done to keep things fair between you and your classmates—after all you are asking for extra time that they do not get. So when you propose a reasonable accommodation, please reflect on what would preserve that fairness.

## Challenging an Activity's Assessment

I am human also: mistakes may occasionally occur when evaluating course activities. Therefore, you have one week after an assessment is returned to challenge it. To do so, you must provide a clear written explanation (email is preferred) outlining your reasons for why there seems to be a mistake. I take all such requests extremely seriously, with a spirit of humility. I will then meet with you, as necessary, to work on resolving things satisfactorily.

Of course, I always encourage you to talk with me about how you may improve on future course activities!

## Photography & Recording Etiquette

To maintain an open academic environment that encourages class discussions about potentially controversial, sensitive, and/or personal issues, I ask that you please refrain from taking photographs or making audio and/or video recordings during class.

## Mobile Phones, Laptops & Related Technologies

Student interactions with portable technology devices can harm the dynamics of the classroom. Unless I tell you otherwise, you must silence mobile phones prior to class and not use them during class. All laptops should be closed unless you have made prior arrangements with me and have demonstrated that using a laptop is necessary for your learning.

## Sharing Course Materials

All my course materials, available digitally or distributed in hardcopy during class, are protected by copyright laws. You may use these materials and make copies for your own personal use, but unauthorized distribution and/or uploading of course materials without my written permission is strictly prohibited.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is embodied by commitments to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, diligence, and rigor in the pursuit of knowledge. As a student in this class, academic integrity means following all directions on assignments, clearly distinguishing your own original work from the work done by others in your assignments, and seeking help whenever you are struggling. This is laid out in the academic honor code (on page 13) for this course. You are also expected to sign an agreement to adhere to that code.

In this class, the typical violation of academic integrity is *plagiarism*. Examples of this include cutting-and-pasting material without proper citation, paraphrasing ideas from external sources (including artificial intelligence tools) without attribution, and borrowing ideas from a classmate without reference and/or acknowledgment.

While I treat violations of academic integrity on a case-by-case basis, I carefully follow the University at Buffalo's process of consultative resolution. According to this process, when I suspect an academic integrity violation, I first meet with the student for an explanation. If, after that meeting, I remain convinced that there is a violation, I will report it to the Chair of the Philosophy Department, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Academic Integrity Office. This protects the student's right to appeal.

Beyond that, I typically impose a penalty that exceeds the penalty of not having done the activity at all. Again, the student retains the right to appeal any such decision.

In particularly severe cases, or when the student has committed previous academic integrity infractions, there may also be further penalties imposed by the Academic Integrity Office.

For more information, please visit their website:

<https://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu>

If you ever find yourself tempted to violate these standards of academic integrity, please seek an alternative course of action. Email me for a reasonable accommodation, or turn in partially completed work. I assure you that the impact will be far more generous in these ways.

### Philosopher's Stones

You initially have 5 philosopher's stones to use during this course.

#### Earning Stones

If less than 70% of the class fully attends a regular class meeting, then everyone who did so that day will earn 0.20 of a philosopher's stone.

If less than 50% of the class fully attends a regular class meeting, then everyone who did so that day will earn 0.50 of a philosopher's stone.

For every 300 points you earn from social annotations, you will earn 0.25 of a philosopher's stone.

#### Using Stones

One philosopher's stone may be exchanged for...

- A 24-hour extension for any professional development activity, any social annotations activity, or any experiment in philosophy (excluding those activities that are done *during* a class meeting). Please note that this extension begins *immediately after* the original due date/time.
- The full 80 philosophy experience points for one regular in-class discussion (this includes a discussion you may have missed).

---

# Academic Honor Code for Introduction to Philosophy

Students at the University at Buffalo, because they part of a community of scholars, must share its commitment to learning and discovery. The nature of this commitment generates fundamental obligations to the highest standards of academic integrity, honesty, and ethics. Adhering to these principles ensures that the academic endeavors we undertake garner us the greatest personal satisfaction and intellectual gain.

The University at Buffalo academic community is composed of learners—individuals dedicated to an open exchange of ideas and who share their ideas for the purpose of improving knowledge for all people. In order for this academic enterprise to be successful, we must embrace personal, ethical, and moral principles to guide our interactions.

These principles require personal integrity, a commitment to honesty without compromise, as well as truth without equivocation and knowing when to place the good of the community above the good of the self. Obligations once undertaken must be met, commitments kept.

The discovery, advancement, and communication of knowledge are not possible without these commitments. Creativity cannot exist without acknowledgment of the creativity of others. New knowledge cannot be developed without credit for prior knowledge. Without the ability to trust that these principles will be observed, our academic community cannot exist.

The commitment of its faculty, staff, and students to the highest of personal, ethical, and moral standards also contributes to the respect in which the University at Buffalo degree is held. Students must not destroy or otherwise diminish that respect by their failure to meet these standards.

## Student Responsibilities

For this course, it is important that no one gains an unfair advantage through academic misconduct. Academic misconduct is any act that does or potentially could improperly distort student grades or other academic records. Such acts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation and/or completion of any course activity.
- Unauthorized collaboration with another student or person in fulfilling course requirements.
- Unacknowledged and/or improper use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in completing any course activity.
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate citations.
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the student.

In addition, each student enrolled in this class must sign an honor agreement affirming their commitment to uphold this code. This agreement may reappear for activities to remind everyone of their responsibilities.

## Faculty Responsibilities

As the instructor, I am also expected to help create an environment where honesty flourishes. To that end, I will do my utmost to make it known as specifically as possible, on multiple occasions, what constitutes appropriate academic conduct as well as what comprises academic misconduct in this course.

Throughout all this, I will also provide clarification to any student questions concerning any of the above.

---

# University Policies

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University at Buffalo is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for equal access to this course for all students. To access accommodation services, you must initiate the request with Accessibility Resources at Student Life.

If Accessibility Resources determines that your request for accommodation is reasonable, they will provide you with an Accommodation Memo. Keep in mind that you will need a new Accommodation Memo each semester. (If you are a returning student and your needs have not changed, you can simply contact Accessibility Resources for an updated Accommodation Memo.)

Once you receive your Accommodation Memo, it is your responsibility to inform faculty and staff of any accommodations that they may need to know about. The Accessibility Resources staff will explain in more detail how (and when) to share this Accommodation Memo with others.

For more information, please visit

<https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/who-we-are/departments/accessibility.html>

## Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment

The University at Buffalo is committed to ensuring that all members of our community can work and learn in a safe environment, free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking.

For my part, I am committed to preserving a classroom and university environment in which each student can contribute and learn free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. I am also committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, and so on.

Please note that **all University at Buffalo faculty members are required to report disclosures of sexual misconduct to the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to me in- or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in assignments), I am required to share that with EDI. EDI, will, in turn, reach out to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. EDI will keep all information private, and will only proceed with an investigation with the consent of the student, or if there is a risk to the health or safety to the reporting student or others if the university does not take action.

For more information, please contact the University at Buffalo's Title IX Coordinator at 716-645-2266, or visit

<https://www.buffalo.edu/equity/support/obtaining-assistance/sex-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment.html>

For confidential assistance, you may also contact a Crisis Services Campus Advocate at 716-796-4399.

## Attendance

The university is committed to promoting student responsibility; therefore, there is no rule for student class attendance. However, every class instructor shall provide students a course syllabus during the first week of class that specifies attendance policies and dates and times for classes, exams and all other required activities. Classes are to meet at the time and location listed in the official university course schedule, unless changed with the consent of the entire class. Instructors may take account of unexcused absences in determining course grades. However, participation in various university activities (e.g., athletics) may require class absence.

Students may be justifiably absent from classes due to military obligations, religious observances, illness documented by a physician or other appropriate health care professional, conflicts with university-sanctioned activities documented by an appropriate university administrator, public emergencies, and documented personal or family emergencies. The student is responsible for notifying the instructor in writing with as much advance notice as possible. Instructors may determine a reasonable amount of coursework that should be completed to make up the student's absence. Students are responsible for the prompt completion of any alternative assignments.

If a student absence situation cannot be resolved between the student and the class instructor, or either party feels unfairly treated by the process, the Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures for Undergraduate Students should be followed. For more information, please visit

<https://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#academic-grievance-policy-and-procedures-for-undergraduate-students>

For information regarding procedures for military call-up during the semester, please refer to the Undergraduate Leave of Absence forms. For more information, please visit

<https://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#leave-of-absence>

## Attendance on Religious Holy Days

Students who belong to religious faiths that require observance during work or school days will be excused from class without penalty if they have provided advanced instructor notification. If such a requested absence results in a student's inability to fulfill the academic requirement of a course scheduled on that particular day, the instructor must provide an opportunity for the student to make up the requirement without penalty. Students shall not be charged any fees or experience any adverse or prejudicial effects due to absence from coursework due to religious observance.

If a student absence situation cannot be resolved between the student and the class instructor, or either party feels unfairly treated by the process, the Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures for Undergraduate Students should be followed. For more information, please visit

<https://catalogs.buffalo.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=19#academic-grievance-policy-and-procedures-for-undergraduate-students>