

# Introduction to Philosophy

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## Volunteer Activity

Volunteer your time and energy to a group that makes the world better (either by doing charity, seeking justice, or working on an election related activity). Or, you can also complete some civic actions that will count as volunteer actions. You are asked to volunteer a minimum of 4 hours in total. You can choose 2–3 different volunteer opportunities or do one that takes 4 hours. If you are currently volunteering somewhere, please speak to me about whether or not this would work for our class.

### Very Important!

**YOUR SAFETY IS A PRIORITY!** Please make sure you pick a way to volunteer that keeps you and others safe.

### Examples

Here are some examples that other students have done for their volunteer activities:

- 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 their place of worship.
- Walking dogs at animal shelters.
- Registering people to vote.

You can find a wealth of opportunities through VolunteerWNY. Visit their website:

<https://www.volunteerwny.org/need/>

In addition, UB's Community & Civic Engagement staff is glad to help you find volunteer hours. Schedule a meeting with them on Navigate by visiting their website:

<https://www.buffalo.edu/studentlife/life-on-campus/community/values/community-civic-engage.html>

I have also marked on the course schedule some volunteering events organized by Community & Civic Engagement. Space is limited for these events, so **be sure to RSVP on UBLinked at least 2 weeks in advance.**

### Here's What I Want You to Do

As you complete your volunteer activities, **log your hours on UBLinked**. Here are instructions for how to do that:

1. Go to UBLinked and log in using your UBIT login and password.
2. Click your profile icon in the top right corner.
3. Select "Service Hours".
4. Click "Add Service Hours" (you must be a member of an organization on UBLinked for these hours to appear as an option).
5. Use "Student Engagement" as the organization if your organization is not listed as an option.

*This "Experiment in Philosophy" is based upon a similar "Experiment in Ethics" from Ramona Ilea and Monica Janzen. I highly encourage you to visit their website on Engaged Philosophy (<https://www.engagedphilosophy.com>) for much more!*

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## Volunteer Activity (Continued)

Once you have completed your 4 hours of volunteer work, you will **submit a final report** to UB Learns with the following items:

- A. **Documentation** that verifies you have completed your volunteer work. Do not forget to do this. This documentation can consist of: pictures, videos, and/or signed confirmation by the organizer as well as the organizer's contact info. Any documentation should make clear what you did. For example, if you volunteered with a lake clean up, don't just take a picture of your smiley face at the beach; take pictures of yourself gathering trash and a final picture to show what/how much you collected. You need to turn in documentation for each volunteer/civic action activity that you want to count towards your 4 hours.
- B. A **log** of hours done, when you did it (date and time), where you did them, and what you did. (I will also verify this information on UBLinked.)
- C. A **short reflection** that connects what you did to course concepts. Recall that (as Socrates understood it) philosophy is supposed to be a force for social good in our communities. So I want you to reflect on how the activity of philosophy connects to your volunteering experience. For example, did course concepts help you better understand the impact of your actions? Or perhaps your actions gave you a better understanding of course concepts? **This reflection should be 300–400 words** (not longer), not including items A and B.

### Here's Why I Want You to Do It

I am having you perform this volunteer activity because it has you...

- 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.

### Here's How It Will Be Graded

Your volunteer activity report will be assessed according to the following criteria:

1. Documented evidence.
2. Reflection on and use of course materials.
3. Extremely polished (no grammatical mistakes, no typos) and college-level writing.
4. Crystal clear organization.
5. Word count.

### Collaboration & Academic Integrity

Feel free to volunteer with your classmates. That will definitely make this a truly memorable experience!

However, I expect you to write your volunteer activity report on your own without resorting to artificial intelligence (AI) tools to write it for you. (Perhaps not too surprisingly, AI tools do a pretty bad job in completing this sort of report.) After all, I am primarily interested in how *you* are thinking about how your experiences connect to the activity of philosophy and other course concepts!

As a result, **volunteer activity reports are not group activities**; you must write your report on your own. Let me know if you are struggling and I'll gladly help!

Above all, **please be honest if you do receive any outside assistance or use the ideas of others**. This includes using AI tools. In any of those cases, be sure to let me know what assistance you received, and I will let you know how to properly acknowledge that assistance in accordance with standards of academic integrity.