



**ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE**  
**Humanities Division**  
**PHI 101 – Introduction to Problems in Philosophy**  
**Course Outline**

**Course Number & Name:** PHI 101 Introduction to Problems in Philosophy

**Credit Hours:** 3.0    **Contact Hours:** 3.0    **Lecture:** 3.0    **Lab:** N/A    **Other:** N/A

**Prerequisites:** Grades of “C” or better in ENG 096 and RDG 096

**Co-requisites:** None

**Instructor:** Dr. Charles Bonner

**Email:** TBA

**Office Hours:** By appointment

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**Course Description:** Introduction to Problems in Philosophy is an introduction to the basic problems of philosophy such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy and aesthetics. In class lectures will give some of the background necessary to understand the problems and the various positions taken by selected philosophers. The readings assigned will demonstrate how various philosophers have responded to the problems. The readings will also be discussed and criticized in class.

**Textbook:** John Cottingham, *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* (Second Edition) Blackwell, 2004

Note: In addition to the readings from the textbook additional assigned texts will be given as class hand-outs (hard copies).

**General Education Goals:** PHI 101 is affirmed in the following General Education Foundation Category: **Humanistic Perspective.** The corresponding General Education Goal is as follows: Students will analyze works in the field of art, music, or film; literature; and philosophy and/or religious studies; and will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

**Course Goals:** Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental philosophical issues, such as “free will” and determinism, whether it is ever right to disobey the law or the moral justification of political power; (NOTE: There are too many fundamental philosophical issues to enumerate here, but the instructor

should select one or two from the extensive literature keeping in mind that this is an introductory course in philosophy.)

2. critique the positions set forth in assigned philosophical essays by comparing how various philosophers deal with the similar metaphysical questions such as what is the nature of reality;
3. discuss various philosophical problems from different perspectives (e.g. Plato's and Aristotle's view of mimesis; free will vs. determinism);
4. describe various methods of acquiring knowledge (epistemology) and explain through argument and by historical example how there are many different methods of inquiry encompassed under the term "scientific."

**Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs):** Upon successful completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of some of the fundamental philosophical issues, such as "free will" and determinism, whether it is ever right to disobey the law or the moral justification of political power:

*1.1 research philosophical topics in the text, library, and in periodicals;*

*1.2 compare at least two philosophers' positions on a given philosophical issue; and*

*1.3 identify and discuss one's own position on the same given philosophical issue*

2. Critique the positions set forth in assigned philosophical essays by comparing how various philosophers deal with the similar metaphysical questions such as what is the nature of reality:

*2.1 discuss different approaches to metaphysical issues*

3. Discuss various problems from different philosophical viewpoints (e.g. Kant's categorical imperative, Mill's utilitarianism, and Aristotle's "golden mean"):

*3.1 describe in written and/or oral form an ethical or political issue related to the problem of mimesis.*

4. Describe various methods of acquiring knowledge (epistemology) and explain through argument and by historical example how there are many different methods of inquiry encompassed under the term "scientific":

*4.1 describe rationalism as it is presented, for example, by Plato;*

*4.2 describe and critique empiricism as it is presented, for example, by Descartes;*

*4.3 describe and critique pragmatism as it is presented by William James; and*

*4.4 explain why the idea of hypothesis and data collection to verify is an inadequate explanation of the acquisition of "scientific" knowledge.*

**Methods of Instruction:** Instruction will consist of a combination of lecture, discussion, and student presentations / debates.

**Outcomes Assessment:** Test and exam questions are blueprinted to course objectives. Rubrics are used to score the critical papers and weekly journals for the presence of course objectives. Data is collected and analyzed to determine the level of student performance on these assessment instruments in regards to meeting course objectives. The results of this data analysis are used to guide necessary pedagogical and/or curricular revisions.

**Course Requirements:** All students are required to:

1. Read the textbook.
2. Be an active participant in class discussions.
3. Complete all class requirements – short writing exercises, class presentation, a midterm examination, weekly quizzes, and a final examination.
4. Take all exams as scheduled No make-ups for missed quizzes.

**Attendance Policy:** Regular and prompt attendance is essential for academic success. Faculty members take attendance at each scheduled class session. Students are expected to attend and be on time for all classes. Individual faculty members may establish specific attendance policies. Attendance records will be turned in to the appropriate Division/Department Chair and/or Program Director at the end of the term and in the interim upon request. Any students with more than three absences will automatically fail the course.

**Methods of Evaluation:** Final course grades will be computed as follows:

<b>Grading Components</b>	<b>% of final course grade</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignments: Short writing exercises</b> Each student will write brief analytical and/or comparative reaction papers to the readings. The student may pick a topic or issue that stimulates her/his thought and should react to it. (There will be in-class writing exercises on various possible topics.) These papers are intended to develop writing skills and encourage participation.</li> </ul>	<b>20%</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Midterm Exam</b> The midterm exam will show evidence of the extent to which students have understood and synthesized course</li> </ul>	<b>20%</b>

content covered in the first half of the semester. Tests will provide evidence of student mastery of course objectives.

- 40%**

• **Class Participation, Presentation, and Weekly Quizzes**  
 One or two short quizzes (various formats) will be given each week, intended to check whether students have done assigned readings and followed class discussions. Students will be expected to participate in class meetings, posing questions, and giving one ten-minute presentation or taking part in organized debates.
- 20%**

• **Final Examination**  
 The final exam will be comprehensive and require the student to critically analyze the positions of the philosophers discussed during the semester.

**Total** **100%**

**Grading System:**

<b>A</b>	<b>90% - 100%</b>	<b>Superior</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>87% - 89%</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>80% - 86%</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>77% - 79%</b>	<b>Above Average</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>70% - 76%</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>60% - 69%</b>	<b>Passing</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>59% - 0</b>	<b>Failing</b>

**Academic Integrity:** Dishonesty disrupts the search for truth that is inherent in the learning process and so devalues the purpose and the mission of the College. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- plagiarism – the failure to acknowledge another writer’s words or ideas or to give proper credit to sources of information;
- cheating – knowingly obtaining or giving unauthorized information on any test/exam or any other academic assignment;
- interference – any interruption of the academic process that prevents others from the proper engagement in learning or teaching; and
- fraud – any act or instance of willful deceit or trickery.

Violations of academic integrity will be dealt with by imposing appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty could include the resubmission of an assignment, failure of the test/exam, failure in the course, probation, suspension from the College, and even expulsion from the College.

**Student Code of Conduct:** All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible and considerate adults who respect the rights of others. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. All students are also expected to attend and be on time all class meetings. No cell phones or similar electronic devices are permitted in class. Please refer to the Essex County College student handbook, *Lifeline*, for more specific information about the College’s Code of Conduct and attendance requirements.

Except for certain classroom exercises relating to technology, use of cellphones, laptops or any other digital devices is strictly prohibited. Penalty for infringement: student will be marked as absent for that class and receive a zero for any class activity (quiz, participation, etc.)

**Course Content Outline:** This is a tentative course schedule; the instructor reserves the right to make changes on it to make it better for the student’s development. Notice will be given should any changes take place. Except for the first and last readings indicated, all assigned readings will be taken from Cottingham’s *Anthology*.

### Class Meeting

(90 minutes)	Topics to be Covered/ Class Activities
1 – 2	Orientation & Course Introduction/Review of Class Syllabus <b>Introduction: What is Philosophy?</b>
3 – 4	Reading: Plato, “Eu thypbro”
5 – 6	<b>Beginning and and of the Western Philosophical Tradition</b> Readings: Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” from <i>Republic</i> Nietzsche, <i>Thos Spoke Zarathustra</i> [selections]
7 – 9	<b>Appearance and Reality: the Problem of Mimesis</b> Readings: Plato, <i>Republic</i> [selections] Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> [selections]  Film: “The Salt of the Earth” (Wim Wenders, 2014)
	[Student presentations begin]
11 – 13	<b>Political Philosophy</b> Readings: Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> [selections]

Rousseau, *The Social Contract* [selections]  
Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* [selections]  
Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Women* [selections]

Film: “Flags of Our Fathers” (Clint Eastwood, 2006)  
or “The Last Emperor” (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987)

14 **Midterm Exam**

15 – 17 **Free Will and Determinism**

Readings: Seneca, *Moral Letters* [selections]  
Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* [selections]  
Pierre-Simon LePlace, “Absolute Determinism”

18 – 20 **Life as a Philosophical Problem (the “Meaning of Life”)**

Readings: Aristotle, *De Anima* [selections]  
René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* [selections]  
Leibniz, “Substance, Life, Activity” from *The New System*

[Organized classroom debates]

21 – 23 **Modern Science and Contemporary Technology**

Readings: Descartes, *Discourse on Method* [selections]  
Aldo Leopold, *The Land Ethic* [selections]  
Leon Kass, “The Wisdom of Repugnance”  
Tamsin Shaw, “Invisible Manipulators of Your Mind”

Film: Shenzhen documentary (WIRED 2017)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGJ5cZnoodY>

24 Review

25 **Final Examination**

NOTE: Some changes may be made with regard to assigned readings (and films) indicated here, depending on the pace of classroom discussion