

Phil 11

**Introduction to
Philosophy**

Fall 2025

Instructor: Carolina Flores (she/they); caro.flores@ucsc.edu

Lecture Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 5:20PM - 6:55PM

Classroom: Classroom Unit 002.

Office: Cowell College Faculty Office Addition, Office 104.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3pm, Wednesdays 4-5pm. (full schedule and sign-up sheet [here](#)). If you absolutely cannot make these times, email me to schedule an appointment.

You can address me as: Prof./Dr. Flores; Carolina; Caro, as you feel most comfortable.

TA team

Name					
Email					
Office hours					

Communications

In this course, **your primary point of contact will be your TA**. For inquiries regarding the syllabus, assignments, or any related matters, please reach out to them first. If your concerns remain unresolved, then feel free to contact me via email. I strive to reply to emails within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. If you do not receive a response within this timeframe, kindly send me a reminder email.

Before emailing, check the syllabus to see if your question is addressed. Do not email about handing in assignments late; just hand them in and they will be graded with the corresponding penalty. (Do email if you have a serious emergency and will need accommodations.)

Required Texts

All readings, handouts, assignments, and announcements will be posted on Canvas.

Course Description

This class will introduce you to a wide range of philosophical problems. We will typically take contemporary, real-world issues as our starting point; as it happens, such issues often lead to traditional philosophical problems. Questions we will consider include: Are you the same person you were last year? What do our social identities—our genders, ethnicities, and so on—mean? Are we living in a computer simulation? How can we know anything about the external world, especially in light of technological developments? What makes life and work meaningful? Should we be giving all our money away?

Through thinking about these problems, you will develop a number of skills that matter in philosophy and elsewhere (e.g. for taking the LSAT): reading and critically engaging with difficult texts; challenging basic assumptions; analyzing concepts, drawing distinctions, and forming and assessing arguments.

If we do this right, it should be one of the most interesting classes you take while in college. I won't spend very much time lecturing at you, nor will I be trying to tell you what to think about these philosophical topics. Instead, much of our time will be spent trying to figure out how the arguments work, breaking things down, and—once things are more clearly in view—thinking about what we think about all of this, generally through active learning activities.

Course Goals

In this class, you will learn to:

- Read and critically engage with difficult texts
- Charitably reconstruct and assess arguments
- Construct clear and persuasive arguments
- Challenge your basic assumptions, beliefs, and values
- Develop and respond to objections to philosophical views
- Analyze concepts and draw helpful distinctions
- Apply philosophical tools to contemporary problems
- Effectively and concisely communicate complex ideas in writing

You will also acquire some basic concepts in philosophy and become familiar with the main subfields of philosophy. I also hope that you acquire a taste for philosophical questioning, feel compelled by the questions we discuss, and choose to take further philosophy classes. :)

Course Requirements

Regular work	Due	20%
Reading annotations on Hypothesis	11:59PM day before lecture	10%
Section attendance and participation	In section	10%

Exams		40%
In lecture midterm	Oct 30, in lecture	30%
Final exam	Dec 9, 7:30 pm	50%

Workload expectations

I expect you to spend on average 8-9 hours per week working for this class (with additional work for the final):

- 3-4 hours on active reading and annotating the texts,
- 3 hours in lecture,
- 1 hour in sections,
- 1 hour studying for the midterm and final (with additional time the weeks before),
- 30 minutes on additional activities (such as organizing your weekly work, reflecting on feedback, coming to office hours, discussing material with your peers),

Discussion Sections

Sections begin meeting on the week starting October 6.

Section	Time	Location	TA
01A	F 8:00 - 9:05AM	Kresge Acad 3301	
01B	F 02:40PM-03:45PM	Earth&Marine B214	
01C	F 04:00PM-05:05PM	Earth&Marine B214	
01D	Th 08:00AM-09:05AM	Cowell Com 134	
01E	W 08:00AM-09:05AM	Soc Sci 1 161	
01F	W 04:00PM-05:05PM	Earth&Marine B214	
01G	W 07:10PM-08:15PM	Earth&Marine B214	
01H	Tu 08:00AM-09:05AM	Earth&Marine B210	
01I	M 08:00AM-09:05AM	N. Sci Annex 102	
01J	M 05:20PM-06:25PM	Cowell Acad 113	

Section swapping procedure

To swap sections, it's necessary to go through the official online enrollment system. This process ensures your enrollment in the desired section is accurately recorded in AIS. Remember, section swapping is contingent on the availability of seats in the desired section. For detailed guidelines on swapping classes, please refer to the registrar's resources:

- Changing a Grade Option or Secondary Section: [How to Edit Enrollment](#)
- Student Enrollment FAQs: [Enrollment Questions](#)

For further assistance with enrollment issues, please reach out to the registrar's office: [Contact Registrar](#)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Class date	Topic	Readings
Sep 25	Introduction. What is philosophy?	No readings!
Sep 30		Syllabus. Jennifer Morton, "An antidote to injustice"
Module 1. What can I know?		
Oct 2	Skepticism: simulations, echo chambers, deepfakes.	David Chalmers, <i>Reality+</i> , Chapters 1 and 2
Oct 7		Thi Nguyen, "Escape the echo chamber" (+ discussion sections start)
Oct 9		Regina Rini, "Deepfakes and the epistemic backstop"
Oct 14	Bullshit and gaslighting.	Harry Frankfurt, "On bullshit"
Oct 16		Kate Ambrason, <i>On gaslighting</i> , Introduction and Chapter 1
Module 2. Who am I?		
Oct 21	Am I the same person I was last year?	Daniel Dennett, "Where am I?"
Oct 23		L.A. Paul, "Becoming a vampire and other transformative experiences" (online)
Oct 28		No lecture.
Oct 30		In-lecture midterm.
Module 3. How should I live?		
Nov 4	What do my	Robin Dembroff, "Why be non-binary?"

Nov 6	social identities mean?	Kwame Anthony Appiah, <i>The Lies That Bind</i> , Chapter 4
Nov 11 no lecture	Meaning of life, meaning of work.	No lecture (Memorial day)
Nov 13		Robert Nozick, "The experience machine" Graeber, "Bullshit jobs"
Nov 18	When, if ever, should we be angry?	Martha Nussbaum, "Beyond anger"
Nov 20		Myisha Cherry, <i>The Case for Rage</i> , Chapter 1
Nov 25	Should we give all our money away?	Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"
Nov 27		No lecture (Thanksgiving break)
Dec 2	A hopefully awesome ending.	Nick Riggle, "How being awesome became the great imperative of our age"
Dec 4		Review session (online)

Instructions for assignments and rubrics

Regular work

Reading annotations on Hypothesis

I expect you to annotate the texts using Hypothesis, a program for collective study. You can access the readings on Hypothesis from the Home page on Canvas: by clicking on "Article title (Read & Annotate)". This lets you view others' annotations, upvote your favorites, and comment on others' annotations.

These annotations are graded on a **Pass-Fail** basis. For a pass (full points), you should write at least 2 annotations, one in each half of the text. These can include substantive replies to others' annotations—in fact, I encourage this. Each annotation should be a sentence that shows some thinking (i.e., not just 'Great!' or 'I disagree!'); at least 40 words. Examples of good annotations include:

- Explaining a key idea from the text in your own words,
- Explaining why you disagree with a key idea in the text, or with what one of your peers writes,
- Seeking clarification on a bit of terminology that isn't clear to you, noting some options for what it might mean in the context,
- Posing a thoughtful question on an idea in the text, inviting further exploration,
- Responding to one of your classmates' questions,
- Offering a real-world example of a phenomenon discussed in the text,

- Drawing a connection between the reading and other material covered in the course.

These are **due the evening before lecture** (i.e. 11:59 PM on Monday and 11:59 PM on Wednesday). If you are up to two days late, you will get 80% of the points. After that, no annotations will be accepted for credit. **You can miss two reading annotations without penalty.** I recommend that you save this leeway for potential emergencies/illness/mental health days. If you have a serious, unavoidable emergency (e.g., the death of a close family member, serious illness, etc.), email me and we will figure out an accommodation.

Lecture attendance and participation

Though I expect students to regularly attend lectures, and it will be difficult to do well in this class without attending, I will not take attendance. It is your responsibility to be motivated to attend.

Section attendance and participation

Sections start the week of October 6. You are expected to attend every section (and can miss 1 without penalty). Your TAs will register attendance.

Midterm and final exam

The main assessment for this course will be in the form of two exams: one in-lecture midterm exam on October 30 (worth 30% of the grade) and a final exam on December 9 at 7:30 pm (worth 50% of the grade). These exams will include a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions, as well as a longer essay question in the final. The midterm will cover the material taught until October 23, and the final exam will cover material from the entire course.

If you need to skip the midterm, the final will count for 80% of your grade. (If you sit both and your midterm grade is lower than the final, I will drop the midterm grade and the final will count for 80%.) There will be no additional make-ups.

The essay question will be graded using the following rubric. Note that '+' and '-' grades will be assigned for fine-tuning.

A: Fully answers the question in a concise and convincing manner. Provides a strong argument, with a clearly stated, relevant thesis, a transparent argument structure, and compelling premises. Considers objections and makes a persuasive effort to address them. Writes clearly, in plain language, and uses terminology in a precise manner. Shows insight by going beyond examples, views, or objections discussed in class.

B: Answers most of the question. Provides a solid argument, with a clear thesis, mostly transparent argument structure, and relevant premises, though the argument may have some significant gaps. Displays understanding of the topic by considering other views, though perhaps without articulating points independently or while showing confusion about some significant

point. Writes mostly in a clear manner, though there might be inaccuracies that compromise the points made.

C: More-or-less off-topic and unclear. Fails to provide an argument and shows significant confusion about major points.

D and below: scarce evidence of effort or understanding along all dimensions.

F: dishonest work.

Grading scale

This class uses the following standard UCSC grading scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
95-100	<95-90	<90-87	<87-83	<83-80	<80-77	<77-73	<73-70	<70-67	<67-63	<63-60	<60

Extra credit

Extra credit will be granted only for the following:

- 1% for attending office hours (with either the instructor or your teaching assistant), having sent in 2 substantive questions by email in advance.
 - Examples of substantive questions are: “I didn’t understand this argument /concept in the reading. Can you explain?”; “What are the applications of view X for real-world issue Y?”; “Here is my objection to the view in paper X.”; or questions about your own work, e.g. “How can I improve the structure of my papers?”, or “How can I improve my time management?”
- 1% for submitting a substantive question, with a 1-paragraph explanation of the background (what you have understood and what is confusing to you, and any other points of note), for the final review.

You can get at most 1% of extra credit, though feel free to send questions for office hours multiple times and/or both come to office hours and submit a question for the review. No additional extra credit will be granted.

Absences and late assignments

Absences

Attending and actively participating in lectures and section meetings is highly encouraged. If you cannot commit to doing so on a regular basis, then I recommend that you switch into another class.

Sections: Sections start the week of October 7, and attendance is mandatory. You can miss **one** section without penalty. Additional excused absences will require a doctor's note. Each unexcused absence beyond your first absence will lower your final grade by about 1%.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

I expect you to be familiar with and to abide by the [university's academic misconduct policy](#). Violations of this policy include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.

In general, anything more than 3 consecutive words from another source should include a citation to that source. If you submit work that appears to have been written using unauthorized sources, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your thinking and writing process. I will also ask you to talk through your submission orally so I can assess your knowledge in real time. If, after our conversation, I conclude it's more likely than not that you did not personally complete an assignment you submitted under your name, you will get a 0 on the assignment, I may give you a failing grade for the entire course, and I will definitely report the incident to the university administration for further sanctions.

ChatGPT and other generative AI tools

TL;DR: Unless you are specifically instructed to use AI in an assignment prompt, using generative AI for ANY task related to this course is not allowed.

Full version: Philosophy is all about critical thinking and skillful writing, both of which can only be developed through concerted effort over time. You're here to learn those skills, and using AI will keep you from doing that.

The easiest way to ensure that your writing does not come under suspicion for AI use is to not use AI. Here is the AI policy for my classes:

- You may not use ChatGPT or any other generative AI platform or technology, including (but not limited to) Bing, Bard, DALL-E, Grammarly Premium, StudyBuddy, predictive text, etc.
- Unless *explicitly* instructed to do so for a specific assignment, you may not use AI for any reason, including (but not limited to) thinking, writing, brainstorming, researching, outlining, editing, or literally any other purpose on the planet that you could conceive of.
- Translation software (including, but not limited to, Google Translate) counts as an AI platform, so its use is strictly prohibited. Even if English is not your first language, you must write your papers directly in English rather than writing them in your native language and translating them. You may look up individual words in an English/Your-Native-Language online dictionary, but you may not use an online translator to translate phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or papers.
- I expect you to be able to easily define any word you use in your writing; please be sure to learn and memorize the definitions of any new words you have gotten from a dictionary.
- For spell-check and grammar-check functions, you are limited to Grammarly Basic (*not* Premium) or the basic spell-check and grammar-check features that come pre-loaded with

word-processing software such as MS Word or Google Docs. You may not use any other editing software, nor should you use the suggestive/predictive text that such software proposes.

If you have any questions about this policy, please ask me so I can provide clarification.

Discourse Norms and Expectations

I expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions, and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging others' views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way.

Other Writing Support

In addition to attending office hours, you might want to consider attending [Writing Study Hall](#) or booking an appointment at the [Writing Center](#) to receive help with assignments.

Accessibility accommodations

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please follow instructions [here](#). I also encourage you to discuss with me ways we can ensure your full participation in this course. I encourage all students who may benefit to learn about the DRC and the UCSC accommodation process. You can visit the DRC website at drc.ucsc.edu, where you can find all information about disability accommodations, book appointments, etc. You can make an appointment and meet in-person with a DRC staff member. The phone number is [831-459-2089](tel:831-459-2089), or email drc@ucsc.edu.

Religious accommodations

UC Santa Cruz welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation without penalty. You should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your instructor early in the term. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the [Dean of Students office](#).

Title IX

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can

receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.