PHILOSOPHY 205:
Critical Thinking and Writing Syllabus

Class Number: 20278
02/02/2026 - 06/01/2026
T/TH: 9:40am-11:00am
Rm: T-270
Office Hours: TBD

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 205 – Critical Thinking and Writing in Philosophy

    This course is an introduction to critical thinking and academic writing through the study of philosophical problems and texts. It is designed to strengthen students' abilities to analyze arguments, evaluate evidence, and develop clear, well-reasoned written positions in preparation for upper-division academic work.
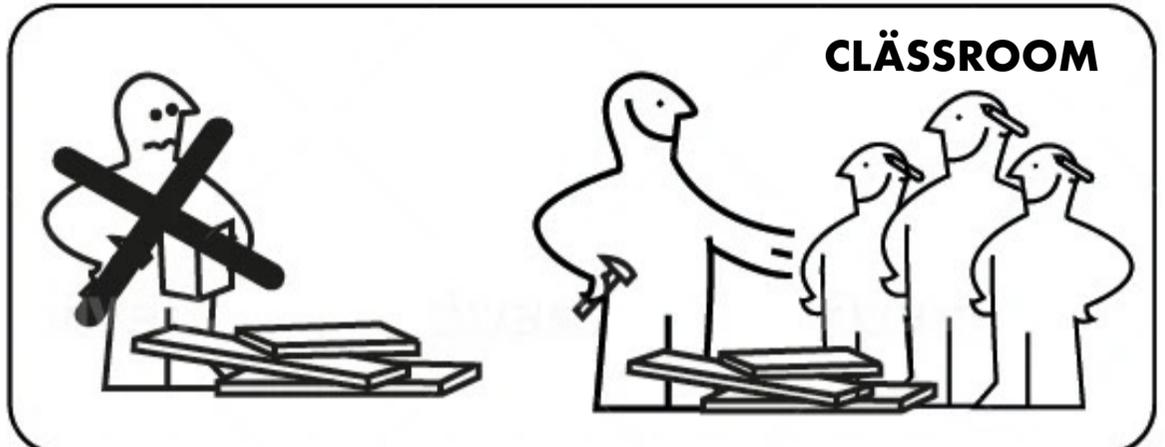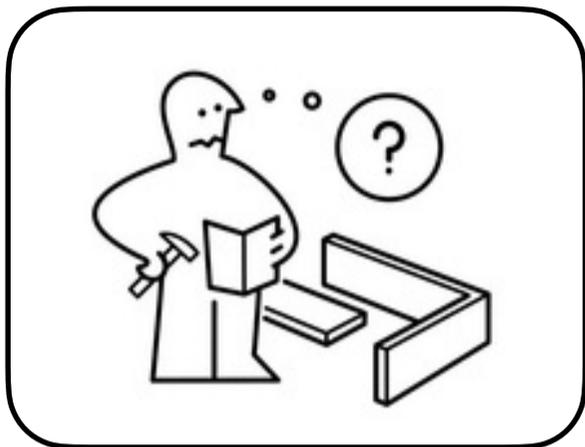
    Topics may be drawn from major areas of philosophical inquiry, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, and philosophy of religion. Students will learn and apply principles of deductive and inductive reasoning, with particular attention to identifying assumptions, analyzing argumentative structure, and recognizing common fallacies in reasoning.

    The course places significant emphasis on academic writing, including thesis development, argumentation, revision, and the responsible use of sources in philosophical analysis. Readings may include selections from classical, modern, and contemporary philosophers drawn from both analytic and continental traditions. Students are encouraged to articulate, analyze, and critically assess their own views in dialogue with philosophical texts and arguments.

Units: 3
Prerequisite: English 101 with a grade of "C" or better, or equivalent; or Assessment Skill Levels R6 and W6; or English 105 with a grade of "C" or better, or equivalent.

MATERIALS

CLÄSSROOM

1. Text
- Text will be provided digitally. Please bring text either printed out and or in digital format to class unless indicated otherwise.

2. Materials
- Access to a computer and internet.
- Access to printing (optional for readings).
- Access to storing electronic and hard copies of essays.
- A notebook and or computer for note taking.
- Please note most of these resources are available at the Library, and tutoring is available at the English Center.

3. Canvas
- To log in go to sdccd.instructure.com. and log in with your 10-digit ID. The password is your 8-digit birthdate (may be different from MySDCCD portal).

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze Philosophical Arguments
  Identify premises and conclusions in philosophical texts,
  evaluate the logical structure of arguments, and assess their
  strengths and weaknesses.

- Apply Principles of Reasoning
  Demonstrate understanding of deductive and inductive
  reasoning by constructing clear arguments and identifying
  common fallacies in written and oral contexts.

- Interpret Philosophical Texts
  Accurately interpret primary philosophical texts by summarizing
  key claims, explaining central concepts, and situating
  arguments within broader philosophical questions.

- Produce College-Level Philosophical Writing
  Write clear, coherent, and well-organized essays that develop a
  defensible thesis, support claims with reasoned analysis and
  textual evidence, and demonstrate appropriate academic style.

- Conduct and Integrate Research
  Locate, evaluate, and responsibly incorporate relevant
  academic sources into philosophical writing using appropriate
  citation practices.

- Articulate and Defend Reasoned Positions
  Formulate and critically defend personal positions on
  philosophical issues while engaging respectfully and logically
  with alternative viewpoints and counterarguments.

COURSE READING LIST

- Plato, *Republic*. Book VII (514a–521b): "The Allegory of the Cave." Translated by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992.

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book I (chapters 1–7); Book II (chapters 1–6); Book VI (chapters 1–5). Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999.

- Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Meditations I, II, and VI. Translated by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993.

- Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Sections IV and V ("Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding" and "Skeptical Solution of These Doubts"). Edited by Eric Steinberg. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993.

- Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Preface and selected sections on the limits and conditions of metaphysical knowledge. Translated by Gary Hatfield. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Preface and Essay I. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

- Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by William Lovitt, 3–35. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Sections 1–43. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

- Derrida, Jacques. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." In *Writing and Difference*, translated by Alan Bass, 278–293. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

- Williams, Bernard. "Moral Luck." In *Moral Luck*, 20–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

- Judith Butler. *Giving an Account of Oneself (chapters 1 & 2),* New York: Fordham University Press, 2005.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introductions
What is philosophy and how to read it?

Week 2: Appearance, Reality, and Interpretation
Plato, *Republic*, Book VII (514a–521b): "The Allegory of the Cave"

Weeks 3-4: Ethics and the Human Good, & Judgment and Practical Wisdom
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Selections from Book I (chapters 1–7), Book II (chapters 1–6), Book VI (chapters 1-5).

Weeks 5-6: Doubt and Method, & Mind, Body, and Knowledge
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Selections from Mediation I & II.

Week 7: Induction and Skepticism
Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Selections from Sections IV and V.

Week 8: Limits of Metaphysics
Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Preface & Selected sections on the conditions and limits of knowledge.

Week 9: Genealogy, Values, Critique
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface & Essay I.

Week 10: Language and Meaning
Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Selections from Sections 1–23.

Week 11: Structure and Instability
Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, Sections 24–43.
Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences."

Week 12: Technology and Modern Thought
Heidegger, Selections from "The Question Concerning Technology."

Weeks 13-14: Morality and Contemporary Philosophy
Bernard Williams, selections from "Moral Luck"
Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, selections from Chapter 1 & 2

Weeks 15-16: Ethics and Foundations, Final Assessment

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- **Reading Responses (15%):** Weekly reflections on each reading assignment.
- **Midterm Essay (30%):**
  (5-10 pages).
- **Final Essay (30%):**
  (8-10 pages).
- **Participation (25%):** Active engagement through attendance, reading, assignments, and discussion.

COURSE POLICIES

- **Attendance:** Required. More than three absences may affect your final grade.
- **Late Work:** Accepted with penalty unless arranged in advance.
- **Academic Integrity:** All writing must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment.
- **Accessibility:** Students with accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester.
- **AI Use Policy:** Submitted work must demonstrate your own understanding of the material. While you may use technology to assist with writing tasks, such as spell checks, using AI tools to generate content **you present as your own** is **unacceptable.** Instances of academic dishonesty, including submitting AI-generated work, will result in a zero grade for the assignment after the instructor evaluates the originality of the submitted work. If a paper appears AI-generated, the instructor will conduct an oral examination with the student to assess their knowledge of the content.

RESOURCE GUIDE SDCC

English Center (EC)

L-209 on Campus*
and Online M-TH 9-4;
Online Only W-TH 4-7, SAT 9-3
https://www.sdcity.edu/
academics/academic-resources/
englishcenter/index.aspx

Learning Resource Center

LRC: Learning Resource Center
(A.K.A. Library) You may obtain
assistance from City College
faculty librarians by phone:
619-388-3421, or online: https://
www.sdcity.edu/academics/
academic-resources/lrc/
index.aspx

DSPS

Students with disabilities who use
accommodations should let me
know ASAP. If you are unsure,
contact DSPS Support Programs
and Services during the first two
weeks of the semester for
assessment and/or to ensure you
receive the necessary
accommodations. **How can you
get in touch?** You may access
services using the online link:
https://www.sdcity.edu/students/
services/dsps/index.aspx

Basic Needs Center
SAN DIEGO CITY COLLEGE

T-341 (619) 388-3684
citybasicneeds@sdccd.edu
https://www.sdcity.edu/about/
leadership/student-services/
student_affairs/
basic_needs.aspx

Classmate contacts:

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2. _____

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3. _____

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