

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-16

Philosophy 1130: Big Ideas

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| Fall Term 2015 WF 10:30-11:30 Room TBA | Instructor: Eric Desjardins Stevenson Hall 2137 519-661-2111 x.87769 edesjar3@uwo.ca |
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DESCRIPTION

Our understanding of the world and of ourselves is shaped by the ideas we bring to the task. This course will explore some of the "big ideas" that frame (and limit) our thinking in contemporary western culture—including science, religion and public and personal decision-making—ideas that we are all familiar with but that are rarely subjected to careful examination. Through readings, lectures and class discussion, we will investigate these ideas and the interconnections among them, focusing on where they came from, what problems they pose, and what effects and implications they have for how we think and what we do. The “big ideas” we will consider include skepticism, God, the scientific method, materialism, democracy, evolution, and property, among others.

TEXTS

All course readings will be provided via OWL.

OBJECTIVES

The course aims to provide students with a broad introduction, at a beginning level, to an array of concepts and arguments that have been central to philosophical inquiry in the western tradition, and to the elements of philosophical inquiry, argument and writing. Students will learn how to formulate useful questions in addressing philosophical texts, how to formulate and criticize simple philosophical arguments, and will become familiar with several key concepts from each of several core philosophical literatures including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and social and political philosophy.

REQUIREMENTS

The class format will consist of lecture and discussion. Discussion will be an important element of the course, so it is important that you stay on top of the reading and do some thinking about it before class. Course requirements include active participation, several short informal writing exercises, a short (5 page) paper, a longer (7 page) final paper, and a short-essay final exam. They are weighted as follows:

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| Participation | 10% |
| Paper I | 15% |
| Paper II | 20% |
| Informal Writing | 20% |
| Final Exam | 35% |

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.