Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval

Course Outline 2026−25

Dr. Benjamin Hill
Dr. Robert J. Stainton

Instructors: Dr. Benjamin Hill (he/him)
Voicemail: 519.661.2111 (x80143)
Student Hours:
- **TBD**
- **TBD**
- **By appointment**

Contact: bhill28@uwo.ca

Robert Stainton:
Student Hours:
- **Tues 14:00−15:00**
- **By appointment**

Contact: rstainto@uwo.ca

Fall Term 2025
Lecture (001)
STVH 1145
- **Tues 11:30-13:30**
- **Thurs 12:30-13:30**

COURSE GOAL

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the excitement, sophistication, and relevance of the history of the philosophy of language during the ancient and medieval periods. Long before Frege and Russell, philosophers have reflected on and theorized about the nature and origins of language, its roles in human cognition, and how it connects with reality. This course highlights several of those themes from Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, and the Medievals.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is a story about the origins of analytic philosophy. It began when philosophers turned toward language (the linguistic turn) inspired by the developments of Frege and Russell. According to this story, Frege and Russell initiated the philosophical study of language and because this new tool showed such promise cutting through metaphysical and epistemological knots, philosophers all dropped Kantian idealism to take up linguistic analysis and the philosophical study of language. There are lots of problems with this story, not the least of which is the idea that the philosophy of language and the linguistic turn began with the ground-breaking work of Frege and Russell. This course, the first of a series of two, shows that Frege and Russell, far from breaking ground on a new sub-discipline, were building on a long-established tradition of thinking philosophically about language.

This first course in the series engages with Ancient and Medieval philosophy of language. We organize the course around four topical themes: what kinds of linguistic meanings are there; where do linguistic meanings come from; what is the connection between language, thought, and communication; and what is the connection between language, thought, and reality. The topical themes will be explored within the context of historical figures and schools chronologically considered: Plato and Platonism, Aristotle and Aristotelianism, The Stoics and stoicism (including Augustine), the Medievals (Ockham, Buridan, and Roger Bacon). We will be considering the doctrines of each figure and school as well as how the ideas of those schools interacted with and built upon each other

Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval

Course Outline 2026−25

Dr. Benjamin Hill
Dr. Robert J. Stainton

to further philosophical reflection on language. We will see how the ideas of Aristotle tended to dominate theorizing

This is a theoretical course in academic philosophy. Thus, it is focused on knowledge development and the learning outcomes involving understanding the readings and developing the skills necessary for philosophy as practiced by academics. Regular attendance, preparation, and full engagement with class discussions are essential to properly experiencing the course.

Prerequisites: Restricted to Yrs 3 & 4 students.
Antirequisites: None
Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course, and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

COURSE ACCESSIBILITY

We strongly believe that philosophy is for everyone and that a philosophical education should be accessible to everyone. Feel free to adopt any supports that you require to fully participate in this course. Please bring to Dr. Hill's or Dr. Stainton's attention any barriers you encounter so that we can address them. Some steps promoting accessibility taken in the course include:

- Automatic deadline flexibility for most assignments (and flexibility available upon request for all)
- All class materials posted to Brightspace, including PowerPoints and Handouts when available
- Audio of class discussion posted to Brightspace
- Transcript of the class discussion posted to Brightspace
- Audio podcasts that supplement class material posted to Brightspace, when available

If you want other materials posted to Brightspace or additional supports for accessibility, please let Dr. Hill or Dr. Stainton know so that they can organize them.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS
We aim to respond to all course communications within 72 hours.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

Western
Arts&Humanities

1. Demonstrate understanding by **Interpreting** and **Explaining** the doctrines about language of the figures and schools studied in the course.
2. Demonstrate understanding by **Discussing** the interactions and intersections of the ideas of the figures and schools studied in the course and their intersections with contemporary movements in the philosophy of language.
3. Breakdown the philosophical doctrines and concepts by **Analyzing** and **Comparing** them with contemporary doctrines and concepts in the philosophy of language.
4. Assess the philosophical strength and viability of the interpretations and doctrines studied in the course by **Judging** their coherence with the primary texts and contemporary perspectives on the philosophy of language.
5. Demonstrate philosophical creativity by **Developing** and **Defending** a viable and philosophically significant thesis about the historical material studied in the course.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Borg, Emma and Sarah Fisher. *Meaning: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025. ISBN 9780192866547. $12.99. May be purchased directly in Perusall or through The Bookstore at Western (includes a code for access in Perusall).

Cameron, Margaret, Benjamin Hill, and Robert J. Stainton, eds. *Sourcebook in the History of Philosophy of Language*. Cham: Springer, 2017. ISBN 9783319269085. Selections will be posted to Perusall.

ICLICKER CLOUD JOIN CODE: TBA

We will be using iClicker Cloud to track class attendance and do some in-class polling. iClicker Cloud is a centrally supported active learning tool. This tool requires students to download an app to their laptop, smartphone, or tablet

PERUSALL

Perusall is a social learning annotation app that measures students' engagement with the course readings. We will be using it in two ways. First, to track students' pre-class reading of the texts. Second, to consolidate student learning of the philosophical content after class discussions. Students collectively comment on the readings, respond to each others posts, and collaboratively learn the material. Engagement is graded by Perusall's AI, which marks student interactions with the texts. The Perusall app integrates with Brightspace. Because it integrates with Brightspace, there is no course code.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

All assignments are due at 23:59 Eastern on their specified due dates and must be submitted via Brightspace unless otherwise specified. Assignments that have an automatic 48-hour grace period may be submitted as "late" but without any late penalty.

To submit an assignment after the 48-hour grace period, when the Brightspace submission portal has closed, contact Dr. Hill and Dr. Stainton and, if necessary, your Academic Dean, regarding an academic accommodation and alternative submission date.

The use of AI is not permitted for Assignments or Assessments in this course, including any Extra Credit Opportunities. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them. Western's guidance on generative AI is available [here](#).

Attendance (10%)
Perusall Assignments (20%)
In-Class Team Debate (15%)
Three "Briefing Notes" (30%)
Cumulative Final Examination (25%)

Attendance (10%) [Formative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4]
Students who are physically present and checked-in via iClicker will receive credit for each class attended. (Credit may be prorated for students arriving late or leaving early.) Students wishing to be excused for an absence should email the instructor **before** the beginning of class **explaining** their absence and requesting to be excused for it. *Extra Credit Opportunity: Students with perfect attendance* (excused absences included) *throughout the term will receive an additional 1% added to their course average.*

Perusall Assignments (20%) [Formative and Summative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4]

> **Perusall Readings (10%)** [Formative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2]
> Students are required to read the assigned texts at least once in the Perusall reader before the texts are discussed in class to receive credit for this assignment. This assignment is not eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period. Student engagement is marked by Perusall's AI on the basis of the following criteria:
>
> - Opening the assignment = 20%
> - Reading to the end = 60%
> - Actively engaged for 60 min = 20%
>
> The importance of reading the text for yourself prior to class cannot be overemphasized. ***Never again will you have the opportunity to read the text for yourself completely untainted by anyone else's perspectives or analysis of the text. After class, your reading will be colored by Dr.***

Hill and Dr. Stainton's presentation of the text and it will be impossible for you to ever return to a state of independence in your engagement of the text. That opportunity to see it for yourself through your own perspective will be lost forever. (The same goes for reading any synopsis or preview of the text prior to your first reading, whether generated by AI or by professionals like Dr. Hill and Dr. Stainton.) This is why we want to give students points for reading a text before class discussion of it. We acknowledge that this may make some students uncomfortable and that some may find a text bewildering when reading it through without outside guidance. But the value of reading it through first for yourself is too important to be outweighed by this discomfort and it is a valuable skill for all students to develop in themselves.

Extra Credit Opportunity: Students with a perfect score on Perusall Readings at the end of the term will receive an additional 1% added to their course average.

Perusall Annotations (10%) [Summative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4]
Weekly, students must post philosophically engaging annotations to the text(s) posted to Perusall. This assignment is eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period. Student annotations are marked by Perusall's AI. There is more than one possible way to score 100% on its marking schema. Its marking schema is as follows:

- Seven high-quality comments = 60% (half credit awarded for medium-quality comments; no credit awarded for low-quality comments), 10% deducted if all comments are clustered together in a short span of text
- Opening the assignment at least 2 times = 20%
- Eliciting at least 4 responses from other students = 40%
- Upvoting comments and receiving upvotes = 20%

Students concerned that the AI did not properly credit their annotations may ask the TA or Dr. Hill and Dr. Stainton to manually review their submission. Instructors will be spot- checking the Perusall Annotations and may make adjustments to the scoring based on their reviews. Posting irrelevant or non-philosophical comments will be flagged by the Perusall AI and manually discredited by the instructors.

In-Class Team Debate (15%) [Formative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 2, 5]
Students will be divided into teams of about four or five, and each team will be assigned either the "pro" or "con" side of a resolution. There will be a group score which will then be modified based on peer reports of the individual student's contribution to the group. This assignment includes three compulsory elements to be handed in, along with the

June 25, 2025

Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval
Course Outline 2026−25

Dr. Benjamin Hill
Dr. Robert J. Stainton

debate itself: a work plan agreed to at the outset by all team members; a written outline of the arguments to be made in the debate; a detailed peer evaluation of oneself and one's team members.

"Briefing Notes" (30%) [Formative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 4]
At the outset of the relevant classes, students will hand in two to three pages of typewritten notes on the chapter assigned. 750-1000 words is appropriate. These "briefing notes" will explain the main aims of the text and the main means by which those aims are met. In the usual case, the main aim will be to establish a conclusion, and the main means will be via an argument, but there can be exceptions. Outlining these means/aims is to be sharply contrasted with describing, sub-section by sub-section, what the author covers in the text. Use of secondary sources is encouraged but not required.

Final Exam (25%) [Summative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4]
Students are required to write a cumulative, 3-hour final examination. The examination will be administered in-person during the examination period at the date and location assigned by the University Registrar. "Undocumented Absences" cannot be used for Final Examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION
The course outline **_must_** direct the student to the **Policy on Academic Consideration** Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs. https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

OWL BRIGHTSPACE
Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

All course material will be posted to OWL Brightspace: https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login.

COPYRIGHT
All original material presented in this course is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License:

© Benjamin Hill, 2025
© Robert J. Stainton, 2025

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES
The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the

Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval

Course Outline 2026−25

Dr. Benjamin Hill
Dr. Robert J. Stainton

Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website here. 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 for appeal.

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

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
The use of electronic devices of any kind is permitted in the course except during examinations.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration; however, students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism. *ASSIGNMENTS* **should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work.** By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and allows them to produce original written contributions.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION
Academic Accommodation is "a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program." https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. "Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students" http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessibleeducation/index.html

Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval

Course Outline 2026–25

<div align="right">

Dr. Benjamin Hill
Dr. Robert J. Stainton

</div>

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.

2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
    a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
    b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
    c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Religious Accommodation
Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/ accommodation_religious.pdf. In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test. Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Accessibility Accommodation
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/

June 25, 2025

Philosop 4991F/9xxxA:
History of Philosophy of Language, Ancient and Medieval
Course Outline 2026–25   **Dr. Benjamin Hill**
                                                              Dr. Robert J. Stainton

academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf.

All exam accommodation services for students with disabilities will be consolidated under Accessible Education (Student Experience). For more information please see accessibleeducaion.uwo.ca.

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

For Philosop 4991F the following grades, which are worth more than 15% of your final grade, will be available prior to TBA
- Attendance (partial)
- Perusall Assignments (partial)
- In-Class Debate
- Briefing Notes (partial)

FINAL COURSE SUBMISSION DATE
The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course (09 December 2025) Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES
Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here.

PLAGIARISM CHECKING
All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

SUPPORT SERVICES
Registrarial Services
Student Support Services

Services provided by the USC
Student Development Centre

Brightspace:
All course material will be posted to OWL Brightspace: https://westernu.brightspace.com/. If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled."

Academic Counselling
Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer you whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic-related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

Mental Health Support
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (https://uwo.ca/health/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-based and sexual violence
Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education
Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Course Outline 2026−25   **Dr. Benjamin Hill**
                                                              Dr. Robert J. Stainton

Learning Development and Success
Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (https://learning.uwo.ca) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Digital Student Experience
Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/.

USC
Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, https://westernusc.ca/services/