



**BETHANY**  
LUTHERAN COLLEGE

Summer 2020—Online  
**PHILOSOPHY 202:**  
**Introduction to Philosophy**

**Instructor:** Dr. Ryan MacPherson  
Honsey Hall 308  
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**Schedule:**

Online  
[moodle.blc.edu](http://moodle.blc.edu)

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”  
*Proverbs 1:7 (NKJV)*

### Catalog Description

This course introduces the basic methods of philosophy by studying the traditional problems of philosophy. Emphasis is placed on developing skills of reading and analyzing philosophical writing, and executing analytic critiques of basic philosophy texts. *Credits: 3. Pre-requisites: none.*

### Relation to Students' Curricular Needs

- *satisfies* the General Education Core Requirement #2A for History
- *elective* for the B.A. in Liberal Arts
- *elective* for the B.A. in Legal Studies and Legal Studies Minor and Paralegal Certificate
- *required* for the Minor in Philosophy

### Required Texts:

- Abel, Donald C. *Fifty Readings in Philosophy*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011. ISBN: 978-0073535807.
- Abel, Donald C. “Glossary of Philosophical Terms.” 2012. (Class handout.)
- Excerpts from the Book of Job. *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. (Class handout.)

### Learning Management System (LMS)

This is an online course utilizing Moodle (<https://moodle.blc.edu>) as a Learning Management System (LMS). The syllabus provides only a general overview of course content and assessment standards. Students are expected to log into the LMS **at least four times per week** in order to remain informed of the instructor's expectations and to participate fully in discussion forums with their classmates.

### Objectives of the College (OCs) Pertinent to This Course

1. Recognize that the historic Christian faith professes that God the Holy Trinity is the source of all knowledge and truth, and that His wisdom is most clearly revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.  
*especially: ... D. Reflect on how your course of study is shaping you for a life of Christian vocation in the family, church, and society.*
2. Demonstrate intellectual, creative, and problem-solving skills.
  - A. Identify and correctly frame problems using appropriate content, theories, and methods.
  - B. Work both collaboratively and independently to produce innovative applications of knowledge, creative expressions, or new insights connected to bodies of knowledge from various fields.
  - C. Gather relevant information on an issue to formulate a defensible conclusion, new idea, or connections among ideas.
  - D. Analyze quantitative and qualitative data using logical reasoning skills.
  - E. Articulate a message effectively in oral and written forms.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of personal and public responsibility.  
*especially: ... B. Reflect upon your involvement as an engaged citizen in different communities and cultures.*

4. Develop habits of thinking that apply to a fulfilling life of learning.  
*especially:* A. Apply content knowledge and skills flexibly to new situations, including professional and vocational contexts.

### Understanding Your Vocation (OC 4)

Your “vocation” is *how your station in life serves as a channel of God’s blessings to the people around you*. Each person has multiple, overlapping stations in life (child, sibling, spouse, parent, student, neighbor, employee, registered voter, etc.). As indicated in OC 1D, Bethany Lutheran College seeks to expand your vocational opportunities so that you might better serve others to the glory of God.

### General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs) for #2a: History

1. Demonstrate an ability to analyze primary sources, interpreting them from both internal evidence as well as external contextual clues.
2. Demonstrate an ability to interpret people, ideas, or events in light of the social and political context shaping them.

### Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

1. To identify and distinguish major contributors to western philosophy, such as Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, and Mill, and to contextualize their ideas according to their historical epochs, such as the classical, medieval, Enlightenment, modern, and postmodern periods.
2. To explain why the perennial “problems” in philosophy are problematic—such as the existence of God, the problem of evil, the mind/body problem, and the freewill/determinism debate.
3. To evaluate philosophical arguments by applying “critical thinking” criteria to primary texts.
4. To improve one’s ability to express philosophical arguments, both orally and in writing.
5. To recognize points of agreement, points of disagreement, and examples of historical influences between various philosophies and a biblical worldview.

### Scope and Sequence

Specific reading assignments and due dates for written work will be posted on the online Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS also will include links for supplemental materials, including an extensive use of educational films. Subject to revision by the instructor, weekly topics will be as follows:

1. **What Is Philosophy?** What is Critical Thinking? What is the Socratic Method? What is the value of philosophy? How does philosophy relate to other disciplines? Etc.
2. **Philosophy of Religion:** Does God exist? How can we know? Is God the author of morality? How can God exist, if evil exists? Etc.
3. **Philosophy of Knowledge:** What is the basis for knowledge? How do reason and experience inter-relate? Etc.
4. **Philosophy of Mind / Personal Identity:** Do we have both a mind and a body, or is the “mind” simply a function of the brain, a product of biochemistry? Am I the same person I was yesterday or last year? What does it mean to have a personal identity, or to change one’s identity? Etc.
5. **Freedom and Determinism:** Do humans have free will? Or, are our decisions pre-determined by the biochemistry of our brain or by early life experiences? What’s the difference between humans and robots—or is there even a difference? Etc.
6. **Ethics:** What’s the difference between good and evil, right and wrong? Who decides? Did God invent ethics? Do people have a right to make up their own standards? Are all values relative to the cultures in which those values are expressed? Etc.
7. **Political Philosophy:** What is justice? How can we best foster justice in our society? Which form of government is most appropriate to human nature? Do people have rights? If so, what is the source of human rights? Etc.
8. **Conclusion:** What have we learned in this class? How can we apply that insight to other academic disciplines, or to other areas of life?

### Assessment Overview:

(A revised version of this syllabus plus information posted online will provide a more complete preview of assessments. Meanwhile, here is a general outline of the kinds of assignments students may expect.)

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Class Participation<br>(Videoconferencing<br>and/or Discussion Forums) | 10         |
| Quizzes (6x1 ea.)  | 6          |
| Essays (6x6 ea.)   | 36         |
| Exams (3 x16 ea.)  | 48         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100</b> |

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| 93.34 - 100.00 | A  |
| 90.00 - 93.33  | A- |
| 86.67 - 89.99  | B+ |
| 83.34 - 86.66  | B  |
| 80.00 - 83.33  | B- |
| 76.68 - 79.99  | C+ |
| 73.34 - 76.66  | C  |
| 70.00 - 73.33  | C- |
| 66.67 - 69.99  | D+ |
| 63.34 - 66.66  | D  |
| 60.00 - 63.33  | D- |
| 00.00 - 59.99  | F  |

### Videoconferencing and/or Discussion Forum

Depending upon enrollment patterns, students will participate in live videoconferencing and/or asynchronous online discussion forums. Specific information will be provided on the Learning Management System (LMS).

The instructor also will participate as needed to guide these discussions with “Socratic questioning.”

These learning opportunities serve as online equivalents to “attendance” and “class participation” in a face-to-face classroom environment.

### Development of Writing Skills

Philosophers are writers, and developing good writing skills is an essential component of a liberal arts education. Therefore, careless work will not be excused simply because this is a philosophy course, rather than an English course. Students are encouraged to make full use of the available resources for strengthening their writing skills, including “Resources for Students/Writing Aids” on the instructor’s website ([www.ryanmacpherson.com](http://www.ryanmacpherson.com)), the instructions for writing projects, and the services of the campus Writing Center (see below).

### Importance of Turning in Assignments on Time

Because of the collaborative nature of online learning, students must submit their work on time so that their classmates can provide timely feedback in the discussion forums.

Assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. Central Time on the dates indicated in the Learning Management System (LMS). *If a student anticipates difficulty completing an assignment on time, he or she should request a deadline extension well in advance of the due date.* This policy is intended to encourage planning and communication skills that will be helpful later in life. Generally, the less often and the longer in advance that a student requests a deadline extension, the more willing the professor will be to grant the request.

Unless a student has received a deadline extension, then the following late penalties will apply to each essay: a 10% grade deduction for *each* school day that the assignment is late. (“School day” means Monday through Friday, excluding school holidays.) Points also are deducted for tardiness in relation to discussion forums, as noted in the Discussion Rubric provided on the LMS.

### Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism may be defined briefly as the presentation of another's original work as if it is one's own, whether by copying exact wording, using similar phrasing, or pursuing a similar course of argument. Avoiding plagiarism in essays generally requires nothing more than giving credit where credit is due, by referring the reader to the original source and placing quotation marks around any copied language. (See *The St. Martin's Style Guide*, sec. 34 for Chicago-style citation formats. Copies are available in the History Resource Room—see below.) Students who commit an act of plagiarism risk a failing grade for the assignment or exam and for the entire course, and even expulsion from the college. The instructor will follow whatever due process policies are established by the college, both for the sake of the student and for the integrity of the college as an academic institution that respects the intellectual property rights of others.

This policy is not an idle statement. The professor has previously enforced it, with the result of one student failing an entire course and other students receiving zero credit for major writing assignments, which resulted in their final course grades dropping from the B and C range into the D range.

### Writing Center

Talented juniors and seniors are available at the Ada Stokes Writing Center (Memorial Library) to provide free consultations for students seeking to produce the best possible essays for any class assignment. The faculty has nominated these students based on their previously demonstrated skills in writing, revising, and polishing essays. Contact the Academic Resource Center (<http://www.blc.edu/academic-resource-center>) to schedule an appointment.

### History Resource Room

Several professional periodicals that serve the historical discipline are available for student browsing in the History Resource Room (HH 300). Students majoring or minoring in history are encouraged to use this room for private study and quiet conversation.

### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS (see the last page for calendar dates)

The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule during the course of the semester should unusual circumstances arise. Generally, students can be confident that this schedule will be followed closely.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Discussion I: What Is Philosophy?  
Discussion II: Syllabus  
**Handout:** Syllabus
  2. **A Sample of Philosophy from the Ancient Near East (Job)**  
Readings: Book of Job (selections)
  3. **Samples of Philosophy from Classical Greece (Plato) and the Modern West (Russel)**  
Readings: Abel, 1–30
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#### PART I: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

4. **The Problem of Evil (Augustine, Mackie, Hick)**  
Readings: Abel, 31–33, 74–96 (optional: 97–107)  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
  5. **Faith and Reason (Plato, Pascal)**  
Readings: Abel, 108–29
  6. **The Existence of God (Anselm, Aquinas, Hume)**  
Readings: Abel, 34–54
  7. **The Existence of God, continued (Paley, Dawkins)**  
Readings: Abel, 55–73  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
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#### PART II: THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

8. **Rationalism (Plato, Descartes)**  
Readings: Abel, 130–54  
**Due:** Essay I
  9. **Empiricism (Locke, Hume)**  
Readings: Abel, 155–74
  10. **Kantianism (Kant); Feminism (Jaggar)**  
Readings: Abel, 175–198
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11. **Review of Parts I and II**  
Readings: Abel, 31–33, 130–32; review other pages as needed  
**Due:** Essay II  
Discussion: Roundtable of Essays I and II; Review for Exam
  12. **Exam on Parts I and II**

### PART III: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

13. **The Mind-Body Problem (Descartes, Caruthers, Nagel)**  
Readings: Abel, 199–228
14. **Personal Identity (Locke, Schechtman)**  
Tue. 16 Oct.  
Readings: Abel, 229–43
15. **Personal Identity, continued (Giles, Dennett)**  
Readings: Abel, 244–65  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
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### PART IV: FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM

16. **Hard Determinism (d'Holbach) vs. Libertarianism/Indeterminism (James)**  
Readings: Abel, 266–85  
Handout: Free Will and Determinism  
**Due:** Essay III
17. **Soft Determinism (Stace) and Self-Determinism (Taylor)**  
Readings: Abel, 286–303
18. **Biological Determinism and Moral Responsibility (Holstrom, Strawson)**  
Readings: Abel, 304–27  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
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19. **Review of Parts III and IV**  
Readings: Abel, 199–200, 266–68; review other pages as needed  
**Due:** Essay IV  
Discussion: Roundtable of Essays III and IV; Review for Exam
20. **Exam on Parts III and IV**

## PART V: ETHICS

21. **Classical Moral Philosophies (Aristotle, Aquinas)**  
Readings: Abel, 328–46
  22. **Categorical Imperative (Kant); Utilitarianism (Mill)**  
Readings: Abel, 347–66
  23. **Leap of Faith (Kierkegard); Will to Power (Nietzsche)**  
Readings: Abel, 367–85
  24. **Existentialism (Satre); Critiquing Relativism (Rachels)**  
Readings: Abel, 386–409 (optional: 410–21)
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## PART VI: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

25. **Classical Political Theories (Plato, Hobbes)**  
Readings: Abel, 422–44  
**Due:** Essay V
26. **Enlightenment Political Thought (Locke, Wollstonecraft)**  
Readings: Abel, 445–65  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
27. **Modern Political Thought (Marx/Engels, Mill)**  
Readings: Abel, 466–83
28. **Natural Rights (King) and Human Rights (Rawls)**  
Readings: Abel, 484–501

**NOTE:** Due to the number of Monday holidays this semester, Lessons 29 and 30 are merged into the same class period. See the calendar on the next page.

29. **Multiculturalism (Raz, Philips)**  
Readings: Abel, 502–23  
**Assessment:** Quiz on People and Ideas
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30. **Review of Parts V and VI and Comprehensive Review**  
Readings: Abel, 1–4, 31–33, 130–32, 199–200, 266–68, 328–30, 422–24; review other pages as needed  
**Due:** Essay VI  
Discussion: Roundtable of Essays V and VI; Review for Exam
31. **Final Exam (Parts V and VI, plus Comprehensive)**

|      | Monday                         | Tuesday                         | Wednesday | Thursday                        | Friday                          | Saturday                       |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| June | 8<br>Lesson 1                  | 9<br>Lesson 2                   | 10        | 11<br>Lesson 3                  | 12<br>Lesson 4<br><b>Quiz</b>   | 13                             |
|      | 15<br>Lesson 5                 | 16<br>Lesson 6                  | 17        | 18<br>Lesson 7<br><b>Quiz</b>   | 19<br>Lesson 8<br><b>Essay</b>  | 20                             |
|      | 22<br>Lesson 9                 | 23<br>Lesson 10                 | 24        | 25<br>Lesson 11<br><b>Essay</b> | 26                              | 27<br>Lesson 12<br><b>Exam</b> |
| July | 29<br>Lesson 13                | 30<br>Lesson 14                 | 1         | 2<br>Lesson 15<br><b>Quiz</b>   | 3<br>(Holiday)                  | 4<br>(Holiday)                 |
|      | 6<br>Lesson 16<br><b>Essay</b> | 7<br>Lesson 17                  | 8         | 9<br>Lesson 18<br><b>Quiz</b>   | 10<br>Lesson 19<br><b>Essay</b> | 11                             |
|      | 13<br>Lesson 20<br><b>Exam</b> | 14<br>Lesson 21                 | 15        | 16<br>Lesson 22                 | 17<br>Lesson 23                 | 18                             |
|      | 20<br>Lesson 24                | 21<br>Lesson 25<br><b>Essay</b> | 22        | 23<br>Lesson 26<br><b>Quiz</b>  | 24<br>Lesson 27                 | 25                             |
|      | 27<br>Lesson 28                | 28<br>Lesson 29<br><b>Quiz</b>  | 29        | 30<br>Lesson 30<br><b>Essay</b> | 31<br>Lesson 31<br><b>Exam</b>  | 32                             |