

# AMSA Philosophy 101 - 2018-2019 Syllabus

School Name: Advanced Math and Science Academy (AMSA)

Instructor: Jordan Alexander Hill

Course Title: PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Credit Hours: .5

Student Audience – Grade Level(s): 11 & 12

Semester(s) Offered: Full Year (*September-June*)

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**Course Description**: Philosophy 101 is a broad examination of the basic issues, problems, and arguments in philosophy. Throughout this course, students will explore: 1) epistemological questions concerning the nature of knowledge and truth; 2) metaphysical questions concerning the nature of ultimate reality, the mind-body problem, consciousness, freedom and determinism, personal identity, and the existence of God; 3) ethical questions concerning morality and the good life; and 4) the basics of propositional logic. Below are just a few of the questions that we will examine as a class, and with which philosophers have been grappling for thousands of years:

- Is there any plan to life and the universe?
- What is knowledge and how do we get it?
- How do we identify what is true and what is not?
- What is the place of our consciousness in the physical world?
- How much of what we perceive of our world is really just in our minds?
- How do we persist over time as our bodily and psychological traits change?
- How are our minds and experiences related to our physical brains?
- Do we have free will? Or are our actions and choices predetermined?
- Does nature shape our personalities more than nurture?
- Is there a God?
- Is there a “right” way to behave, live, and treat others?
- What is the nature of good and evil?

As a class, we will place emphasis on the careful reading of primary and secondary sources, critical and systematic thinking, and expressing ideas through verbal and written arguments. Together we will grapple with a broad array of writings, from classical to contemporary, in addition to watching a philosophical film.

**Course Objectives**: Students will be able to...

- Summarize philosophical arguments, problems, questions, and issues---representing multiple and varied perspectives---with clarity and sophistication.
- Identify the major subdivisions within the discipline of philosophy.
- Identify and elucidate the core ideas of some historically important philosophers.
- Demonstrate knowledge and fluency within an area of the history of philosophy.
- Distinguish subjective opinions from justified philosophical claims.
- Critically evaluate philosophical arguments and positions through close-reading and analysis, using philosophical tools like logical inference and deductive reasoning.
- Speak and write clearly about philosophical issues by making original, valid, and sound claims, thereby demonstrating competence to further develop philosophical inquiry.
- Explain the importance/relevance of rationally & constructively questioning basic beliefs & assumptions
- Consider arguments (from multiple perspectives) with charity, tolerance, open-mindedness, and ethical awareness.

CRITICAL THINKING OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ develop meaningful questions to address problems or issues.</li> <li>❖ gather, interpret, and evaluate relevant sources of information.</li> <li>❖ reach informed conclusions and solutions.</li> <li>❖ consider analytically the viewpoints of self and others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Philosophy 101 reflects the “Socratic” tradition of philosophy questioning. This has a “public justification” dimension in that all views are subject to questioning from all sides. One on one student and teacher dialogues; class debate; debate format in written work.</li> <li>● This course emphasizes the effort to find generalizations which accurately capture concrete phenomena; this requires close attention to issues of practical relevance. Students will learn to provide historical, social, biological and polemical context for debates.</li> <li>● Philosophy 101 teaches logical argumentation, both formal and informal reasoning. We present a range of arguments and have students evaluate validity and truth of premises.</li> <li>● Nearly all views in philosophy are contested, therefore all sides to each debate should be evaluated. To this end: we engage in class debate and use debate format in written assignments.</li> </ul>
SOCIAL/GLOBAL AWARENESS OUTCOMES	HOW DOES THE COURSE ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Students will begin to understand how their lives are in part shaped by the history of philosophical ideas.</li> <li>❖ Students will understand that their philosophical views have social, economic and environmental consequences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Philosophy 101 focuses on how our beliefs, and more generally our worldview determines and is determined by a broad range of factors. We present cultural and sociological context for the formation of philosophical worldviews; we present theories of philosophical change across place and time.</li> <li>● The philosophical debates about our nature and place in the world, about the ultimate nature of reality all have clear social consequences. We present historical, cultural, sociological context for philosophical questions.</li> </ul>

**Required Texts and Materials/Optional Materials as Appropriate:**

Primary Texts:

- *Philosophy 101*, by Paul Kleinman
- *Ethics 101*, by Brian Boone
- *The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy* (Fourth Edition), by William F. Lawhead

All other materials will be provided in handout form or online by the instructor: They consist of essays, articles, illustrative short stories, videos, and films. (See detailed course schedule below.)

**Instructional Methods:** Philosophy 101 is a discussion-based course, which means students will engage with the literature and philosophical topics/issues by actively participating in rich classroom discussions and debates. The course will rely on a variety of discussion formations and strategies, including Whole Class Discussion, Large and Small Group Discussion, Socratic Questioning, Think-Pair-Share, Formal and Informal Debate, and many others. The teacher will often explain concepts/ideas and will use video/multimedia to illustrate complex subjects; however, students are expected to actively contribute to discussions and fully

participate in all activities. For homework, there will be nightly readings--short articles, essays, textbook chapters, and/or videos--to which students will respond during the following class. To ensure students are completing nightly readings, and to provide a warm-up for in-class discussions, journal responses and reading quizzes will sometimes be given at the start of class.

**Methods of Assessment/Evaluation:** Assessments will include **1)** daily in-class discussion and participation; **2)** two exams (one midterm, one final); **3)** four projects (one per marking period)--including a poster (M1), a blog (M2), a debate (M3), and a presentation (M4); and **4)** journals and reading quizzes.

Method:	%
Discussion/Participation:	TBD
Daily Classwork/Journals/Reading Quizzes:	TBD
Projects (4 Projects - 1 Poster, 1 Debate, 1 Presentation, 1 Blog):	TBD
Exams (2 Exams):	TBD

**Course Content:** To access a tentative schedule for Philosophy 101, visit the following website, and click on the tab labeled "Course Content": [www.highschoolphilosophy.org](http://www.highschoolphilosophy.org).

### **Statement of Academic Integrity:**

**Plagiarism:** According to *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, "the word for plagiarism, which derives from the Latin word for 'kidnapping,' refers to the unacknowledged use of another's words, ideas, or information" (602). Even if you have paraphrased or summarized the words of another person rather than copied them down as a direct quote, you must indicate the source from which they are taken.

***Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated in this class. Any incidents of plagiarism will result in a grade of "0" for the assignment. Students who plagiarize will not be given a second chance to rewrite the given assignment and will not be given an alternative assignment. As a punishment, you will also be reported to the VP. If a second incident of plagiarism occurs, you will receive a "O" for the class. Refer to your MLA style guide or ask me if you have any questions about this.***

*Please also refer to my Academic Integrity Statement:*

Every student at AMSA is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of his or her academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, and in engaging in critical discourse. Any written work submitted by a student must be his or her own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, he or she must cite the source by such means as an in-text citation, a footnote, and/or a works cited page.

### **Make-Up Policy/Late Work:**

- A. All homework assignments are due at the start of class, unless otherwise indicated. Assignments handed in late will be docked points. Each day an assignment is late, 20% will be deducted from your grade (unless it is handed in later that same day, in which only 10% will be deducted). After three days, the assignment will no longer be accepted.
- B. If you are absent, you will have one week to complete any and all missing assignments, tests, quizzes, etc. without penalty.
- C. Work assigned before your absence is due upon your return to class.

**Student Responsibilities:** Because class readings, discussions, and other group activities are essential to your success in this class, it is expected that each individual will take part fully in these activities. Participation grades will be based on behavior, contributions to discussion, and general involvement in all classroom activities. Those who choose to act inappropriately (sleeping, engaging in off-topic chatting, using cell phones, etc.) will be given a 0 for their participation grade and/or asked to leave the classroom. Participation grades will be calculated by adding up daily scores. Students will be given a participation grade each day. Philosophy is a course that These behaviors include swearing, name-calling, putting others down, or acting in a disrespectful manner to anyone in the class. Bullying or any other type of harassment will NOT be tolerated.

**General Warning:** If you do not like reading, writing, or thinking, do *not* take this course. There will be a significant amount of reading assigned in this course, and I will be evaluating your critical thinking skills in discussions and assignments in order to gauge your comprehension of the material. In order to be a good philosophy student, it is not necessarily important to be able to memorize dates and definitions, but rather to have the ability to actively engage in argument and critical thinking of one's own views as well as those of one's peers.

**A NOTE REGARDING MY SCHOLARLY VALUES:** My classroom will be a safe place, but NOT a "safe space." *What do I mean by that?* I mean that while all students can count on being safe from behavior that is violent, threatening, harassing, bullying, and/or inciting, as a student, you will NOT be safe from hearing different points of view, some of which may run counter to your worldview. Philosophy deals with deep and often controversial adult material, including issues related to ethics, political systems, religion, the existence of God, death, consciousness, principles of justice, etc. Students must be prepared to engage with all material as presented and assigned. Alternate assignments, readings, lectures, etc., will not be provided. As a class, we will be exploring the views of many thinkers with diverse, disparate, and often challenging views. This class is not a place of intellectual dogma or orthodoxy; it is a place of viewpoint diversity and heterodoxy.

**VIEWPOINT DIVERSITY:** To fully understand an issue, you need to challenge your assumptions and consider that view from multiple angles. Viewpoint diversity can help you be more persuasive. By engaging with people with whom you disagree, you can understand where they are coming from and craft arguments that will be more likely to appeal to them. Viewpoint diversity opens up opportunities for growth and learning. Therefore, it's beneficial to talk to both people with whom you agree and disagree, and try to learn why they believe what they believe. Viewpoint diversity refers to the state of a group in which members approach questions or problems from multiple perspectives. When a community is marked by intellectual humility, empathy, trust, and curiosity, viewpoint diversity gives rise to engaged and civil debate, constructive disagreement, and shared progress towards truth. When the learning environment does not include ideologically diverse voices and fails to engage seriously with dissenting ideas, students miss the opportunity for their thinking to be challenged. They don't get the chance to figure out which ideas hold up within the crucible of open inquiry. Biases go unchecked, critical thinking is abandoned, and the learning environment becomes a self-affirming echo chamber in which ideological validation displaces critical inquiry.

### **Mr. Hill's Expectations**

1. BE RESPECTFUL to your classmates and the teacher. This is especially important in a philosophy class, as we are often dealing with subjects, beliefs, and worldviews that evoke passionate responses from others. It is thus important to be respectful, open-minded, and charitable to others' viewpoints and arguments.

2. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOURSELF AND FOR YOUR WORK! Take pride in your work and make no excuses!
3. RAISE YOUR HAND! To make sure everyone has a chance to contribute, we do not call out answers in this class.
4. SIGN OUT AND TAKE A PASS if you need to leave the room! Only one student at a time may leave the room.
5. PUSH IN YOUR CHAIRS WHEN YOU LEAVE THE ROOM!

And last, but certainly NOT least:

7. TURN OFF AND PUT AWAY YOUR CELL PHONE BEFORE THE START OF CLASS! The use of any unapproved digital or technological device during class is strictly prohibited and will result in a "0" for the day, the confiscation of your device, and potentially, your removal from the classroom.

**Journal Rubric:**

5	Correct, detailed answer to the given question. Examples and quotes (when text is available) are given to back up what the writer is saying. Relevant and sufficient reasoning/evidence/explication is used to support all claims made.
4	Correct, detailed answer to the given question. Some support is provided in justification of claims. Reasoning and/or evidence is given, but is not entirely relevant sufficient, valid, and/or sound.
3	Mostly correct answer to the given question, however details are lacking. Question is answered briefly with little to no evidence and/or reasoning given to support the writer's assumptions.
2	Entry makes incorrect, inaccurate, invalid, or untrue claims; however, some aspects of the journal are correct. Evidence and/or reasoning is not sufficient and/or relevant. Entry is largely incoherent.
1	The writer is totally incorrect and it is evident that he/she did not read. Response is poorly written, incomplete, and/or incomprehensible.
0	No Entry.