



PHI 101:
Introduction to Philosophy
with Dr. Sarah Vincent



Course Description

The advertised course description is as follows: “Welcome to the wonderful world of philosophy! To get started, we will discuss argumentation, including basic terminology, how to identify arguments, how to assess arguments, and how to construct arguments. With that groundwork in place, we will have the skills to engage philosophical arguments about particular topics of interest. Aside from the work in informal logic we will have already done, this class will introduce three more areas of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. More specifically, our topics in metaphysics will be life and death. Our topics in epistemology will be trust and gaslighting. Our topics in ethics will be racism, sexual consent, and coming out.”

To elaborate on the general description above, we will begin the course learning about philosophy generally, the foundation of which is informal logic. In our informal logic section, we will cover basic terminology, how to identify arguments, how to assess arguments, and how to construct arguments. With that groundwork in place, we will have the skills to engage philosophical arguments about particular topics of interest in more specialized sub-disciplines of philosophy. Aside from the work in informal logic we will have already done, this class will introduce three more areas of philosophy: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. More specifically, our topics are life, death, trust, gaslighting, racism, sexual consent, and coming out. We don't often get a chance to wrestle with topics of this sort in a classroom, so I hope you are excited by this description. I anticipate that you will enjoy your time here as the course unfolds.

Structure-wise, the first section on informal logic differs from the other three on metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics; this is because those latter three sections will involve reading assigned articles written by contemporary philosophers. For each reading, there will be a class session dedicated to exposition, and another to evaluation; you will need to complete the readings before the relevant classes, but I will help guide you through understanding the elements of those arguments before we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each position defended in those arguments. Then, a third class session for each reading will be dedicated to in-class question/response activities. On exposition and evaluation days, classes will be a mix of lecture and discussion – a blend of ‘I (the professor) do’ and ‘we (all of us) do.’ Activity days that follow that preparation gives students the responsibility for completing tasks and sharing their answers – ‘you (groups of students) do.’ I find that most students truly benefit from this scaffolded ‘I do, we do, you do’ approach to our time together; I hope you too will find the structure helpful.