



First-year Philosophy
PH1001 (Introduction to Philosophy) &
PH1005 (Philosophy and Social Science: An Introduction)

University College Cork
2026-27

Lecturers:
Dr. Jason Dockstader
Dr. Kian Mintz-Woo
Dr. Joel Walmsley
Dr. Adam Loughnane

The planned schedule for this module is as follows:¹

Class Times:

Monday, 3-4pm, Boole 3
Wednesday, 12-1, Boole 2
Thursday, 10-11, Boole 3

Monday 14th September “Freedom: Metaphysical and Political”
(Dr. Jason Dockstader)

Monday 19th October 1st Test: Conducted in-class

Wednesday 21st October- “Introduction to Jonathan Swift”
Thursday 22nd October (Dr. Vittorio Bufacchi)

Monday 26th October Bank Holiday—No class

Wednesday 28th October “An Introduction to Climate Ethics”
(Dr. Kian Mintz-Woo)

Thursday 3rd December 2nd Test: Conducted in-class

—End of 1st Semester: Christmas Break—
—End of Module for students taking PH1005—

Monday 11th January— “What Sort of Thing is a Mind?”
Thursday 18th February (Dr. Joel Walmsley)

Monday 1st February Bank Holiday—No class

Monday 22nd February— “Existentialism East and West”
Thursday 15th April (Dr. Adam Loughnane)

Wednesday 17th March Bank Holiday—No class

Friday March 19th— Easter Recess
Friday April 2nd

Thursday 15th April 3rd Test: Conducted in-class

—End of 2nd Semester—
—End of Module for students taking PH1001—

¹ Students taking PH1005 as part of the BSocSc degree are only required to participate in the first semester. Students taking PH1001 (e.g., as part of the BA degree) are required to participate in both semesters.

Section Descriptions:

This course is intended to give beginning students an idea of the variety of issues which are dealt with in philosophy. By addressing a number of different areas of the discipline, you will learn what some typical philosophical problems look like, how philosophers discuss these problems, and something of the range of different theories that have been developed in response to them. A common theme throughout the four sections of the module is freedom. We will focus on political, moral, mental, and existential freedom.

Section 1: “Freedom: Metaphysical and Political” (Dr. Jason Dockstader)

This section of the module introduces students to the history of the free will debate. First, we will address the nature of the debate between free will and determinism, defining free will, determinism, libertarianism, and compatibilism. We will discuss the principles of alternate possibilities and sufficient reason. Next we will focus on fatalism and its appearance in classical Greek and Indian thought. Then we will look to the earliest examples of libertarianism, compatibilism, and determinism, focusing on Western ancient and medieval philosophy. With respect to compatibilism, we will emphasize that the view emerged simultaneously with classical liberalism, especially in the Anglophone figures Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jeremy Bentham.

We will ask three fundamental questions: one descriptive, one substantive, and one prescriptive. The descriptive question concerns what exactly free will requires, what constitutes its nature. The substantive question asks if we in fact have free will. And the prescriptive question asks what should we do with our answers to the descriptive and substantive questions, that is, should we change our social and political practices based on how we answer the descriptive and substantive questions. The readings will be supplied on Canvas.

Section 2: “An Introduction to Climate Ethics” (Dr. Kian Mintz-Woo)

The impacts of the greenhouse gas emissions we produce today will be felt around the world and over long periods of time. For these reasons, they make current injustices worse: those countries which are already poorer will face greater harms and many who did not produce the emissions will face their impacts. This situation presents moral and political philosophers with a variety of questions, such as how do climate impacts threaten the liberty and freedom of current and future people? How should we divide the burdens of addressing climate change? What principles should guide the costs and benefits of decreasing our emissions or addressing climate risks? How should we estimate the harms of these risks, especially difficult comparisons such as those which involve birth and death? We can also think about this at an individual level; what contribution can individuals make and should those contributions be in terms of changing our behaviour or in terms of social or political action?

Besides principles, we can also use the moral theories philosophy provides, such as deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. These different theories draw attention to different aspects of the challenge that are morally relevant, with notice of the relevance of climate ethics for individual and social liberty and freedom. At the end of this section, you should be able to describe the strengths and weaknesses of different theories and principles and see how they can be applied to the important challenge of climate change. The main readings will be provided via Canvas.

Section 3: “What Sort of Thing is a Mind?” (Dr. Joel Walmsley)

The mind is at once the most familiar and the most perplexing of all the phenomena in the universe. We all have minds, and we use them every day—thinking, feeling, imagining, deciding, willing—yet

how something as strange and complex as consciousness comes from a lump of grey matter in the skull is still deeply mysterious. In this section, we'll explore some of the central questions in philosophy of mind by considering the different ways that philosophers have addressed the question "What sort of thing is a mind?" Is it something ghostly, like a soul, as found in many religious traditions? Is it the same thing as the brain, the body or behaviour, as studied by the natural sciences? Is it better understood as a kind of information processing, like in a computer? Perhaps it's not a thing at all, but rather a process, or an illusion, or something else? And whatever answer we give, how might that shape our thinking about other big philosophical debates, such as whether we really have free will?

Along the way, we will also pay careful and specific attention to some of the methods—the use of reasoning and argument, conceptual analysis, and "thought experiments"—that make philosophical approaches to these questions distinctive.

Section 4: "Existentialism East and West." (Dr. Adam Loughnane)

A great deal of philosophy is concerned with sorting right from wrong (ethics), true from false (epistemology/logic), and the real from the unreal (metaphysics/ontology). These are indispensable philosophical pursuits. However, thinkers known as "existentialists" have focused on deeply meaningful human states that are not best understood in terms of the binary oppositions that structure the principal domains of philosophy. If we feel profound joy or suffering, knowing whether we are "right" or "wrong" about the cause may not capture what is most crucial about that experience. Likewise, whether an overpowering emotion is "real" or "unreal" may be less important than developing the skills to augment or diminish those feelings. The experience of suffering, nihilism, authenticity, the sense of the absurd, emptiness, or existential nausea, as well as positive feelings such as freedom, joy, ecstasy, serenity, and enlightenment—these extremes of human experience have been contemplated by philosophers in both Eastern and Western traditions beyond the categories and logic of epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics.

In this section, we explore the texts of Western existentialists such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus and Beckett as well as Eastern philosophers from Buddhist and Daoist traditions. The guiding question throughout this section is: *How can existential thought contribute in concrete ways to augmenting one's freedom?*

Reading Material:

The lecturer for each section will post electronic copies of additional reading materials specific to their section on the Canvas site for the module; these can be downloaded and read or printed as necessary. Note: it is at the discretion of the lecturer as to any additional materials (e.g., lecture notes) will be made available: do not assume that will be the case.

In addition, the following more general books, podcasts and websites may be of some interest:

- Blackburn, S. (2001) *Think* (Oxford University Press) (Library: Q+2 100 BLAC)
- Honderich, T. (ed.), (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Q+2 R 103 OXFO)
- Blackburn, S. (2008) *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (available online via the UCC Library webpage).
- O'Hear, A. (1985) *What Philosophy Is* (Penguin)
- Baggini, J. (2006) *The Pig That Wants to Be Eaten* (Plume)
- Kukla, A. & Walmsley, J. (2006) *Mind: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction to the Major Theories* (Hackett) (Q+2 150 KUKL)
- Mumford, S. (2012) *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction*, (OUP)

- Mawson, T.J. (2005) *Belief in God: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion* (Clarendon Press)
- “Philosophy Bites” Podcast: <http://www.philosophybites.com/>
- “HiPhi Nation” Podcast: <https://hiphination.org/>
- Philosophy 24/7 Podcast: <http://philosophy247.org/>
- “The Partially Examined Life” Podcast: <http://partiallyexaminedlife.com/>
- “History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps” <http://historyofphilosophy.net/>
- BBC “In Our Time” Philosophy Podcast: <https://bbc.in/2vWk2Cs>
- “Wireless Philosophy” on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WirelessPhilosophy>
- “What is Philosophy” CrashCourse: <https://bit.ly/2lUKUy5>
- Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Assessment & Examinations:

Assessment for both PH1001 (First Arts Philosophy) and PH1005 (First Social Science Philosophy) is made up entirely of “Continuous Assessment,” consisting of (i) written tests and (ii) attendance and participation at tutorials. **There is no summer examination for First Year Philosophy.**

Assessment is structured as follows:

- PH1001: (i) All three tests, worth a combined total of 75%. (i.e., 25% each)
(ii) Attendance and Participation at Tutorials, worth 25%
- PH1005: (i) The first two tests (i.e., 1st semester only), worth a combined total of 75%
(ii) Attendance and Participation at Tutorials, worth 25%

Tests:

The first in-class test will take place on **Monday, October 19th**. It will cover material from Dr. Dockstader’s section. The second in-class test will take place on **Thursday, December 3rd**. It will cover the material you studied with Dr. Mintz-Woo. Both lecturers will provide you with further details of the nature and format nearer the time.

The third in-class test (for PH1001 only) will take place on **Thursday, April 15th 2027**, and will cover all of the material you studied in the second semester (with Dr. Walmsley and Dr. Loughnane). Again, lecturers will say more about the nature and format of these tests at the appropriate times.

Please mark these dates in your calendar at the beginning of the academic year. If you are unwell, or face some other emergency at the time of a test, please notify the lecturer by email as soon as reasonably possible and, if necessary, provide appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor’s certificate; in such cases, the department will make ad-hoc arrangements for a make-up test). Students are expected to make email contact with the relevant lecturer immediately and to provide relevant documentation within two weeks of their absence.

Optional Essays:

In addition to the tests, lecturers will assign optional essay titles that help focus your study. It is strongly recommended that you do these essays, submit them to your tutor, and receive advice and feedback as preparation for the tests. Completing the essays will get you additional marks towards your “attendance and participation” grade.

Late registration:

If you transfer into philosophy after the start of term, it is your responsibility to contact the lecturer concerned, and Dr. Jason Dockstader, in order to help you catch up on what you have missed. If you

transfer into philosophy before the end of the 4th week of the first semester, you will still be required to take the first test with the rest of the class. If you transfer into philosophy after that date, ad hoc arrangements may be facilitated as necessary.

Procedures for repeat examinations:

If you receive a failing mark for First Arts Philosophy overall (i.e., less than 40% in total): Marks in passed elements of continuous assessment are carried forward. Failed elements must be repeated. Students who have failed the aggregate of the In-Class Tests must take a supplemental In-Class Test. Students who have failed the Attendance & Participation component must submit a 1,500 word essay.

For more details, please see the entries for PH1001 and PH1005 in the Book of Modules, here:

<https://www.ucc.ie/admin/registrar/modules/>

Tutorials:

In addition to the three weekly lectures, students must sign up for a weekly tutorial. Each student is asked to register for a tutorial that is consistent with their schedule of lectures. Tutorials are in person. In order to sign up for a tutorial, you must go to the Canvas page for this module, click on 'People,' then click on 'Group,' then click 'Join' for the tutorial you prefer. You cannot change your tutorial once you sign-up unless there are extreme circumstances. In such a situation, you must contact Dr. Dockstader (j.dockstader@ucc.ie). Note that participation in tutorials will be graded, and will count for 25% of a student's overall marks:

In the past, we have noticed a very high positive correlation between good attendance and participation, and good marks in the in-class test, so please make the most of the tutorials by being an active participant; do not expect to 'get by' on lectures and online material alone. Tutorials will start in the week beginning September 21st 2026.

Websites

Department of Philosophy:	https://www.ucc.ie/philosophy
Instagram:	https://www.instagram.com/uccphilosophy/
Facebook:	https://www.facebook.com/PhilosophyDepartmentUcc
Twitter:	https://twitter.com/uccphilosophy
Canvas:	https://ucc.instructure.com

Contacts

- **Dr. Joel Walmsley** is the Head of Department in Philosophy, and may be contacted on 021-490-2566 or at j.walmsley@ucc.ie.
- **Dr. Jason Dockstader** is the First Year Philosophy co-ordinator, and may be contacted about any practical queries, problems etc., that arise in connection with your study of Philosophy in first year. Email: j.dockstader@ucc.ie.
- **Dr. Robert Parker** will be the senior tutor for First Year Philosophy, and may be contacted with any practical queries, problems etc., that arise in connection with your tutorials. E-mail: 73034126@umail.ucc.ie.
- **Colette Connolly** is the Departmental Administrator for Philosophy. She can be contacted on 021-490-2588 and at c.connolly@ucc.ie

**The Philosophy Department is located at:
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