

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

Instructor: Dr. Benjamin Hill (he/him/his)

Voicemail: 519.661.2111 (x80143)

Student Hours:

- **MW 09:30-10:00 (at Einstein's)**
- **T 13:00-14:00 (3140 STVH)**
- **By appointment**

Contact: OWL Messages

Winter Term 2023

Lecture (001)

[WL 258](#)

Mon 12:30–13:20 Eastern

Wed 12:30–14:20 Eastern

COURSE GOAL

The goal of this course is to empower students to think and converse philosophically about issues currently facing Canadian society and being publicly discussed in the media and by Canadians.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g., First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research, and community service.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is philosophy and how can it help us to grapple with “questions of the day,” important questions that are being publicly debated today. As a class, we will decide which pressing questions are most important to us, and we will then explore them philosophically to determine how a philosophical mindset can contribute to the public conversation about them.

This course approaches philosophy as a way of life rather than as an academic discipline. It is a course in practical philosophy rather than theoretical or applied philosophy. For more information about this see the [Mellon Philosophy as a Way of Life project](#). This course is

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

structured as an “[active learning](#)” course, rather than a straight-up lecture course. This means that it is structured around in-class activities that provide opportunities for self-discovery and peer-led learning. Regular attendance, preparation, and full engagement during class activities are essential to properly experiencing the course.

We will cover five issues in the course and spend two weeks on each topic. Students will vote on which topics are of greatest interest and concern to them and the top five will be the topics explored in the course. Students may nominate topics for consideration during the first day of the course. Below is a list of suggested topics for consideration.

- Political inaction on Climate Change
- Rise of Fascist Political Violence
- Structural Racism (BLM)
- Reparation (Indigenous Peoples)
- Public Health Mandates
- Neo-Liberal Economic Policy
- Capitalism (Labor Relations and Dignified Work)
- Fake News
- Aging Population
- Personal Freedom and Responsibility

Prerequisites: None

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.

PREFERRED NAMES AND PRONOUNS

If you prefer to be called something other than the name on file with the Registrar, please let us know. Please also feel free to specify the pronoun(s) you wish to be referred to by. If anyone mispronounces your name or forgets your preferred name/pronoun, please correct them. I always greatly appreciate being corrected when I mispronounce or forget someone’s preferred name/pronoun.

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

See [Appendix 1](#) for the alignment of the course learning outcomes with the program and Western degree learning outcomes.

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

1. **Engage** in philosophical reflection and conversation in oral and written contexts.
2. **Appreciate** the nuance and depth that philosophical reflection brings to our engagements with difficult contemporary public issues.
3. **Analyze philosophically** the questions and concepts involved in four pressing issues currently being debated publicly.
4. **Articulate** some of the considerations and arguments that contemporary philosophers contribute to the public discussions of four pressing contemporary issues.
5. **Construct** coherent and plausible defenses of their own analyses and positions on four pressing public issues in oral and written contexts.
6. **Engage** in philosophically deep and respectful discussions about four heated questions of the day.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Unless specified otherwise, assignments are due at 23:59:59 Eastern on their specified due dates and must be submitted via OWL. Assignments that have an automatic 48-hour grace period may be submitted via OWL as “late” but without any late penalty. To submit an assignment after the 48-hour grace period, when the OWL submission portal has closed, contact Dr. Hill and, if necessary, your Academic Dean, regarding an academic accommodation and alternative submission date. Assignments that are designated “Pass/Fail” will be scored as follows: Pass = 100; Fail (with submission) = 40; No Submission = 0.

Homework and In-Class Assignments (20%)

Essays (40%)

Final Examination (40%)

Homework and In-Class Assignments (20%) [Formative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

A variety of assignments will be given throughout the term. Typically, there will be a written component that is to be completed at home, but there will also be oral and written work to be completed and submitted during class. In-Class Assignments will not be eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period. Homework and In-Class assignments may be graded Pass/Fail or Numerically.

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

Essays (40%) [Summative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 3, 4, 5]

Students are required to write TWO (2) 1250-word (minimum) essays philosophically defending a position on the issues studied in the course. The essays are eligible for the automatic 48-hour grace period and will be graded numerically and qualitatively. The first is due at 23:59:59 on **Friday 17 Feb 2023**. The second is due at 23:59:59 on **Friday 31 Mar 2023**. A guide and rubric will be available in OWL.

Final Examination (40%) [Summative Assessment] [Learning Outcomes: 3, 4]

Students are required to write a cumulative, 3-hour final examination. The final examination will be administered via OWL “Tests & Quizzes” and will be open book/notes/resources. It will be graded numerically and consist of a mix of question-types. Students will be given a 72-hour window by the Registrar (TBD) in which to write the examination.

Extra Credit Opportunities [Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 6]

Opportunities for extra credits may be made available throughout the term. Some may be for extra credit on the score of a particular assignment; some may be for extra credit on one’s course grade. All opportunities will be announced on OWL with the expectations and potential credits specified.

STUDENT ABSENCES

If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.

Assessments worth less than 10% of the overall course grade:

Please submit the assessment to Dr. Hill via OWL Messages before the final day of classes.

Assessments worth 10% or more of the overall course grade:

For work totalling 10% or more of the final course grade, you must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to the Academic Counselling Office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as possible. For further information, please consult the University’s medical illness policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Essay Course Word Count

As a course that satisfies the senior level essay course requirement, student enrolled in this course should expect to submit a minimum of 2500 words of written work.

Department Target Average Policy

The Philosophy Department has a policy requiring a 72 average for each 1st year course. The grades I assign will be in the OWL “Gradebook”. Should there be any discrepancy between the grade I recorded for you in OWL and your “official” grade reported by the Registrar, you should contact the Philosophy Department Undergraduate Chair for clarification and explanation. Western’s current policies and procedures for undergraduate student academic appeals can be found [here](#).

REQUIRED TEXTS

All required readings and source material will be made available through OWL.

OWL

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<http://owl.uwo.ca>) 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: <http://owl.uwo.ca>.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

COURSE SOCIAL MEDIA

~~In addition to our official OWL site, we have a course website and blog as well as social media presence.~~

~~Website and blog:~~

~~Facebook public page: <http://www.facebook.com/WEModPhil>~~

~~Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DrBenjaminHill>~~

~~To receive credit for any public event or social media challenge, your posting must include the official course tags. Students without any social media presence or who wish not to post anything that might compromise their personal privacy to social media should~~

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

~~contact Prof. Hill regarding alternative ways of documenting their participation or meeting the social media challenge(s).~~

~~@drbenjaminhill1~~

~~@WEModPhil~~

~~#2202westernearlymodphil~~

~~#westernearlymodphil2020~~

~~#westernu~~

PROFESSIONALISM

Education is a professional activity and campus is a professional environment. Everyone is expected to comport themselves in a manner appropriate for and conducive of such an environment. All academic activities, interactions, and conversations should be conducted in a respectful, inclusive, and professional manner. **Judgmental, belittling, shaming, rude, ridiculing, bullying, and all other such behavior, comments, and attitudes are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.** We require that all discussion be respectful and kind even when that discussion is critical, defensive, emotional, and contradictory.

COPYRIGHT

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

© Benjamin Hill, 2023



AUDIT

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

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the 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 of appeal.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Western Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found [here](#).

Religious Accommodation

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/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive 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 Phil 1305G the following grades will be available prior 04 Mar 2023, a total of 20% of your final grade:

- Paper #1

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. 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](#).

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

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](https://www.turnitin.com).

SUPPORT SERVICES

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Support Services](#)

[Services provided by the USC](#)

[Student Development Centre](#)

Academic Counselling

Your Home Faculty's Academic Counselling or Academic Advising Office will support or refer 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.

Philoso 1305G: Questions of the Day

Course Outline 2022–23

Dr. Benjamin Hill

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/>.

**Philoso 1305G:
Questions of the Day**

Appendix 1 (Aligned Learning Outcomes)

Dr. Benjamin Hill

Course Learning Outcomes	Aligned Philosophy Program Learning Outcomes	Aligned <u>Western</u> <u>Degree</u> <u>Learning</u> <u>Outcomes</u>
Engage in philosophical reflection and conversation in oral and written contexts.	HSp 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 MajP 1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3
Appreciate the nuance and depth that philosophical reflection brings to our engagement with difficult contemporary public issues.	HSp 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 MajP 1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3
Analyze philosophically the questions and concepts involved in four pressing issues currently being debated publically.	HSp 2, 4, 5, 6 MajP 2, 4	6, 7
Articulate some of the considerations and arguments that contemporary philosophers contribute to the public discussions of four pressing contemporary issues.	HSp 2, 4 MajP 2, 4	1, 3, 5, 6
Construct coherent and plausible defenses of their own analyses and positions on four pressing public issues in oral and written contexts.	HSp 4, 7, 8, 10 MajP 4, 6, 7, 8	4, 6
Engage in philosophically deep and respectful discussions about four heated questions of the day.	HSp 7, 8, 10 MajP 6, 7, 8	4, 6, 7