

The Examined Life: Ultimate Questions

PHIL 1700 – Fall 2023

1 General Information

Course Number: PHIL 1700

Location: Ritter Hall 204

Pre-/Co-requisite: CORE 1500

Credit(s): 3 Credits

Sections and Meeting Times:

Sec. 15 2:10pm – 3:00pm MWF

Sec. 16 3:10pm – 4:00pm MWF

Instructor: Chris Holland

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: christopher.holland@slu.edu

Zoom: <https://slu.zoom.us/my/clholland>

Course Website:

<https://canvas.slu.edu/>

Catalog Course Description: This course invites students to explore enduring philosophical questions and to reflectively evaluate the various answers given them by thinkers from a range of social, historical, and religious contexts. Students will tackle ultimate questions in a range of philosophical domains, including issues such as the nature of self and ultimate reality, morality and human meaning, rationality and the pursuit of truth. The aim of the course is to give students an opportunity to critically examine their own beliefs and commitments in dialogue with each other and with great thinkers past and present. (Offered Fall, Spring, and Summer)

2 University Core

Ultimate Questions: Philosophy is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:

University Core Student Learning Outcomes

The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:

- SLO 1: Examine their actions and vocations in dialogue with the Catholic, Jesuit tradition
- SLO 2: Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to address complex questions
- SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:

Component-level Student Learning Outcomes Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Explain and evaluate arguments for philosophical answers, including those in the Catholic tradition, to ultimate questions concerning the nature of humanity, reality and God, knowledge, and/or the good life
- Apply an array of analytic methods, conceptual tools, logical principles, and other resources to their own inquiry into ultimate questions
- Articulate and reflect on their own worldview and practices in dialogue with different answers to ultimate questions, including answers in the Catholic tradition

3 Course Learning Outcomes

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to some of the most historically important philosophical texts, ideas, and thinkers as well as to the distinctive activity of philosophy itself. Over the course of the semester, students will:

1. **Learn what great thinkers have to say in response to enduring philosophical questions and how their answers represent philosophically and dialectically distinct answers to such questions.**

Students will consider a range of philosophical voices and perspectives—including classic texts from Plato and Aristotle, texts from thinkers in the Catholic tradition, and texts by thinkers historically underrepresented in the western canon. In reading and discussing such thinkers and texts students will be encouraged to consider and assess both the philosophical merits and costs of the various views they encounter.

2. **Learn to *explain, analyze, and evaluate* arguments for philosophical answers to ultimate questions.**

Students will learn to give a close reading of philosophical texts with a view toward being able to explain and analyze the arguments they contain. By the end of the semester, students should be able to (i) identify the key premises, assumptions, and conclusions present in the texts they encounter and (ii) explain the content of the arguments' premises in a way that (iii) illuminates how these premises support an inference to the conclusion. Finally, students will learn to evaluate the arguments they encounter by, among other things, assessing them according to logical notions of validity and soundness.

3. **Begin to shape their own answers to ultimate questions by applying distinctively logical and philosophical ways of thinking to them.**

To this end, students will learn to raise philosophical questions, to identify unexamined presuppositions, and to reflect on their own assumptions and commitments. Students will also work at philosophically articulating their own views by learning how to offer evidence, arguments, and responses to objections to their own answers to ultimate questions.

4. **Learn to articulate their own worldview and practices in dialogue with different answers to ultimate questions.**

Students will be provided with opportunities to reflect on the way in which their own commitments, values, and practices may overlap with or diverge from the perspectives they encounter in their readings, in lectures, and in dialogue with one another.

4 Course Materials

You will need to purchase *Philosophy Illustrated*, edited and illustrated by Helen De Cruz (New York: Oxford University Press; ISBN: 9780190080532). All other course materials will be available through Canvas.

5 Evaluation and Grading

Requirement	Weight	Grade Type	Feedback	Est. Turnaround
Participation	10%	credit	by request	3–5 days
Homework	10%	credit	class discussion	next class
Self-Assessment Quizzes	10%	percentage	automated	immediate
Argument Evaluation 1	10%	letter	paper comments, rubric	3–5 days
Argument Evaluation 2	10%	letter	paper comments, rubric	3–5 days
Argument Evaluation 3	15%	letter	paper comments, rubric	3–5 days
Term Paper: Phase 1	10%	letter	paper comments, rubric	3–5 days
Term Paper: Phase 2	5%	letter	rubric	3–5 days
Term Paper: Phase 3	20%	letter	paper comments, rubric	5–8 days
*Extra Credit Project	3%	credit	none	N/A

5.1 Participation

You will receive a participation grade of “credit,” “partial credit,” or “no credit” for each day of class. To receive credit, you will need to come to class on time and prepared. You will also need to pay attention and contribute to the class discussion (e.g., voting in classroom polls, adding your voice to a think-pair-share or small group activity, asking questions, answering questions). Unexcused absences result in a no-credit grade for the day you miss. Excused absences reduce your total number of participation grades (e.g., if we have 42 class meetings and you have 2 excused absences, then your participation grade will be based on the 40 class meetings you were expected to attend). See also [§6.2 Attendance](#).

5.2 Homework

You will have approximately one homework assignment per week. Homework assignments will be posted to Canvas and receive a grade of “credit,” “partial credit,” or “no credit.” Most homework assignments will require you to discuss or answer questions about the reading. Your two lowest homework grades will be dropped.

5.3 Self-Assessment Quizzes

Throughout the semester you will take short quizzes on Canvas. Typically, the quizzes will be available for 3 days and have 5–10 multiple choice questions. The quizzes are not timed and you will be allowed to take each quiz as many times as you like (while it is available on Canvas) and keep your highest score.

5.4 Argument Evaluations

You will complete three 1-to-2 page argument evaluations. Detailed instructions for each evaluation will be posted to Canvas.

5.5 Term Paper

You will write a term paper on the topic “What is a good life?” There will be three phases to the paper. Each phase will receive its own grade. Detailed instructions for each phase will be posted to Canvas.

1. Initial Paper: A 1000-word paper on the topic “What is a good life?” The paper will be shared with two of your peers.
2. Peer Feedback: You will read and provide feedback for two peer papers. A worksheet will be provided to guide your feedback.
3. Final Paper: A 1500-word revision of your initial paper.

5.6 Extra Credit Project (Optional)

You may chose to complete **one** of the following projects, three percentage points will be added to your final grade. *Contact me for further details before you begin working on the project.*

1. Illustrate a thought experiment from Julian Baggini’s *The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten* and give a 300 word explanation. Book on reserve at Pius Library.
2. Write a 400-600 word summary for a chapter in David Chalmers’s *Reality+*. Book on reserve at Pius Library.
3. Identify a philosophically interesting argument from a popular source (e.g., a scene from a film, song lyrics, a political speech) and complete a 4th argument evaluation.

5.7 Grading Scale

A	(4.0)	93–100%	B–	(2.7)	80–82.99%	D	(1.0)	60–69.99%
A–	(3.7)	90–92.99%	C+	(2.3)	77–79.99%	F	(0.0)	below 60%
B+	(3.3)	87–89.99%	C	(2.0)	73–76.99%			
B	(3.0)	83–86.99%	C–	(1.7)	70–72.99%			

6 Policies and Guidelines

6.1 Communication

Occasionally, I will need to communicate important time-sensitive information outside of class. With this in mind, I expect you to check both the announcement section of the course Canvas page and your school-supplied email at least once day.

The best way to reach me is by email. I’ll do my best to respond within 24 hrs. If a matter is urgent, include the word URGENT in the subject line.

Your email should include:

- An informative subject line with your course and section number
- A greeting/salutation (e.g., “Hello Mr. Holland,” or “Chris,”)
- A thorough description of what you are trying to inform me of or ask me about
- A signature with your first and last name.

6.2 Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and we will take attendance. University-authorized absences are excused and require documentation (see the [university’s attendance policy](#) for more information). Other excused absences are granted at my discretion. An unexcused absence will result in a “no credit” participation score for the day you miss; an excused absence will reduce your total number of participation grades.

Please do not come to class sick. If you are sick tell me as soon as you can (before or after class). Your first “sick day” will be automatically excused, additional sick days *may* require a doctor’s note. I also provide excused absences for various emergencies (again please contact me as soon as you can).

In the event that you miss several classes and are unable to meet the course objectives you should contact me and your academic advisor to discuss a course extension (see the [Incomplete Course](#) policy) or withdrawal (see [Course Withdrawal](#) policy).

6.3 Late/missing work

I understand that sometimes, despite our best efforts, things do not go as planned. With this in mind, I have built some flexibility into the class assignments.

Homework and Self-Assessment Quizzes

Your two lowest homework grades will be dropped and all self-assessment quizzes will have a three day window (72 hours). In most cases, I will not accept late homework assignments or self-assessment quizzes. Exceptions are made for emergencies and serious health issues.

Extensions for Argument Evaluations and Term Paper Phases

If you need an extension for any reason on an argument evaluation or term paper phase, I will grant a three day (72 hours) extension. To receive an extension, you must email me by midnight the day before the assignment is due. At this point, I will automatically grant the extension. You do not need to specify the reason you are asking for the extension as long as you email me by midnight the day before the assignment is due. You may have one extension per argument evaluation and term paper phase.

If you need an extension for more than three days, your situation is likely serious enough that you should contact the Office of the Dean or the Student Health Center. In such cases, I will be happy to coordinate with those offices to arrange a schedule for you to complete your work.

The penalty for late papers (after either the original or extended deadline) will be 10% for each 24 hours after the deadline.

6.4 Distance Education Etiquette

Your actions in distance education contexts are just as important as in on-ground, classroom-based educational contexts—and sometimes require additional attention and commitment, as some distance education technologies might be less familiar to us. Accordingly, all students should follow the guidelines below:

Non-Video & Asynchronous Contexts (Canvas, Online Chats, Discussion Boards, etc.)

1. When using the “Chat” or “Discussion Board” (or similar) features of your course management system, remember that your course-related communications to the instructor or other students should be considered “professional” (they are not like texts to your friends). Remember that course context and all related written work—including chat and discussion board transcripts—can be recorded and retrieved.
2. Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm; without the context of facial expressions or other body language, your tone or intent could be missed or misunderstood by others.
3. Respect and be attentive to the diversity of your classmates and instructor. Before communicating, consider your message in the context of the class’ diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, marital status, geography, etc. Consider the diversity you can see or know—as well as that you cannot.
4. Respect others’ time and life circumstances, which often don’t allow for an immediate response to a question or comment.

Synchronous Video Contexts (Zoom, etc.)

1. Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Remember to “un-mute” yourself just prior to speaking. Identify yourself when you begin speaking.
2. Expect a few seconds of delay in getting a response from the instructor or another class member to a question; wait before repeating your question or assuming it was not heard.

3. If possible, position your camera such that your video feed does not capture too much of your surroundings or other activity/sound from your home/location. Be conscious of posters, art, or other surroundings that others might find offensive or inappropriate for an educational context.
4. Use the “Raise Hand” and “Chat” (or similar) features of your video-conferencing tool. This limits verbal interruptions and the confusion generated when multiple people try to speak at once.
5. Just as in an on-ground, face-to-face class, limit side conversations, multi-tasking (on your computer or otherwise), and use of your cellphone.
6. Temporarily turn off your video feed and mute your microphone when engaged in any non-class conversation or activity.
7. Respect and be attentive to the diversity of your classmates and instructor. Before communicating, consider your message in the context of the class’ diversity in race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, marital status, geography, etc. Consider the diversity you can see or know—as well as that you cannot.
8. Remember that video-based class sessions (including chat transcripts) may be recorded and retrieved for later viewing.

6.5 Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost’s Office website at: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

7 Support and Services

7.1 University Writing Services

University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations with trained writing consultants who help with everything from brainstorming, outlining, and proposing research questions to documenting sources, revising, and implementing feedback. These consultations can take place in-person, asynchronously, or via Zoom and can be scheduled through EAB Navigate—Student. Getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels on different writing projects (including but not limited to class assignments, conference papers, cover letters, dissertations, group projects, multimedia assignments, personal statements, senior capstone projects, short answer questions on applications, speeches, and theses). For additional information, visit <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/university-writing-services/index.php> or send an email to writing@slu.edu.

7.2 Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at accessibility_disability@slu.edu or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student’s eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared

with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact to CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

7.3 Student Success Center

The Student Success Center (SSC) supports students in reaching their goals in and out of the classroom. Providing a variety of resources, the Student Success Center houses both the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) and Academic Support, which includes Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, University Writing Services, and Student Success Coaching. The Student Success Center is located in the Busch Student Center, Suite 331, and students can make an appointment with any SSC resource via EAB Navigate. To learn more about the Student Success Center and its resources, please visit: <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/index.php>.

7.4 University Counseling Center

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers free, short-term, solution-focused counseling to Saint Louis University undergraduate and graduate students. UCC counselors are highly trained clinicians who can assist with a variety of issues, such as adjustment to college life, troubling changes in mood, and chronic psychological conditions. To make an appointment, call 314-977-8255 (TALK), or visit the clinic on the second floor of Wuller Hall. For after hours needs, please press #9 after dialing the clinic number.

7.5 Wellness

All students experience stressors and challenges at some point, and seeking support is beneficial. Such challenges may be the result of academic concerns (such as those related to particular assignments or content in a course), or they may be more personal in nature (such as concerns related to relationships, mental health, loss, identities, alcohol or drugs, housing or food security, or finances, among other things). If you experience these or other difficulties, please consider seeking support from the resources available to you.

- For concerns related to this course, please feel free to contact me. I am invested in your success and will support your success in the ways I can.
- Additionally, you have access to the many resources SLU provides in support of your personal wellness. You will find a list of available resources on [the Well-being page of the SLU website](#).

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis: please consult [the Crisis Support and Warning Signs on the University Counseling Center website](#).

In the spirit of *cura personalis*, the University sees your academic success as connected to your health and well-being and provides resources to support your holistic wellness.

7.6 Basic Needs Security

Students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and any other challenges that are impacting their personal and/or academic wellbeing are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office for support. Students can submit an [intake form](#), email deanofstudents@slu.edu, or call 314-977-9378 to connect with their office. Students may also communicate directly with their instructors about any challenges they are experiencing to receive support and resource referrals.

7.7 Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you

Speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, **that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX.** This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies, and for resources, please visit the following web addresses: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.

8 Important Dates

Assignment due dates are subject to change with the exception of Term Paper Phase 3.

Sept. 4	NO CLASS
Sept. 15	ARGUMENT ANALYSIS 1 DUE
Sept. 27	NO CLASS
Oct. 6	ARGUMENT ANALYSIS 2 DUE
Oct. 25	ARGUMENT ANALYSIS 3 DUE
Oct. 26–27	FALL BREAK
Nov. 13	TERM PAPER PHASE 1 DUE
Nov. 20	TERM PAPER PHASE 2 DUE
Nov. 22–24	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Dec. 13	TERM PAPER PHASE 3 DUE
Dec. 15	EXTRA CREDIT PROJECT DUE
Dec. 20	GRADES DUE
