

**PHIL 1002W: Introduction to Philosophy  
Stoner/Spring 2016**

M/W/F 9:05 - 9:55, Anderson Hall 230

Instructor

Dr. Ian Stoner  
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Office hour: Friday 10-11, and by appointment.

Teaching Assistants

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Office hour: Thursday 10-11, and by appointment.

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Office hour: Tuesday 10-11, and by appointment.

Course Description

This course introduces selected topics and methods of philosophy through the examination of several philosophical questions, including the existence of God, the significance of death, the existence of free will, and the relationship between minds and brains. Because the primary purpose of the course is not to convey information, but rather 1) to develop skill in understanding and evaluating arguments, 2) to develop active reading skills, and 3) to subject our own beliefs to critical examination, we will rely on small-group discussions and short, careful writing whenever possible. Expect the course to be about 1/2 lecture and 1/2 guided, small-group discussions. Expect to do some writing—short papers, long papers, or in-class essay exams—every week.

Required Texts

Required and suggested readings are posted on the course website:

<http://www.tc.umn.edu/~ston0235/1002/>

On small-group discussion days, I will often direct you to review specific passages in the readings. Please bring the week's assigned readings with you on scheduled discussion days.

## Course Requirements

Midterm exam:	100 points
Final exam:	100 points
Weekly Short Writing:	150 points
Long Paper:	300 points
Discussion Guide:	250 points
Participation:	100 points

**Exams.** The midterm and final are both in-class essay exams. I will hand out review questions ahead of the test, and will draw all test questions from the review sheet.

**Participation.** Small-group discussions are the centerpiece of the course. For these discussions to succeed, your attendance alone is insufficient. You must come prepared to contribute positively to full-class meetings and to sections.

**Weekly short papers.** Each week you will write a one-page paper. I will email the prompt for the week's paper to your U of M email address on Friday, and the papers are due at the beginning of class the following Monday. Short papers will not be accepted late for any reason. Your total score for the weekly writing assignments will be the sum of your ten best scores out of thirteen available assignments. (That is, we'll drop your lowest three scores.)

**Long Paper.** In addition to the weekly writing you will write a longer paper that will require you to develop and defend your own views in some detail.

**Discussion Guide.** The last week of the semester, you will write your own discussion guide for one of the assigned readings. You will use your guide for an in-class small-group discussion, and then turn it in as your second piece of substantial writing.

## Grade Table

At the end of the semester, I will total up all your points and assign letter grades based on this table. These thresholds indicate firm cut-off points. For example, a total score of 864 points is a B, while a total score of 865 is a B+.

Letter Grade	Point threshold
A	935
A-	900
B+	865
B	835
B-	800
C+	765
C	735
C-	700
D	600
F	—

## Course Calendar

### **Week 1: (Jan 20/22) Introductions**

Tellez, "Just Lather, That's All"

### **Week 2: (Jan 25/27/29) The existence of God**

Aquinas, Five proofs of the existence of God (Focus on the First Way and the Fifth Way)

Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Parts II, III, and IX

Pascal, "The Wager"

### **Week 3: (Feb 1/3/5) The problem of evil**

Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* Parts X and XI

### **Week 4: (Feb 8/10/12) The meaning of life**

Nagel, "The Absurd"

Wolf, "Meaning in Life"

### **Week 5: (Feb 15/17/19) Personal identity 1**

Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality"

Dennett, "Where Am I?"

Wednesday: Long paper prompt handed out in class

### **Week 6: (Feb 22/24/26) Personal identity 2**

Williams, "The Self and the Future"

Schneider and Corabi, "The Metaphysics of Uploading"

### **Week 7: (Feb 29/March 2/4) Death**

Nagel, "Death"

Velleman, "So It Goes"

Monday: Midterm review sheet handed out in class

Wednesday: Draft of Long Paper due at beginning of class

Friday: Class canceled (Ian is presenting at a philosophy conference in Chicago)

### **Week 8: (March 7/9/11) Midterm**

Monday: Midterm review

Wednesday: Midterm exam

Friday: Class canceled

### **Spring Break (March 14-18)**

**Week 9: (March 21/23/25) Minds and brains 1**

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations II and VI  
Lewis, "Mad Pain and Martian Pain"

Monday: Long paper drafts handed back at end of class

**Week 10: (March 28/30/April 1) Minds and brains 2**

Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"  
Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"  
Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"

Friday: Final drafts of the long paper due at beginning of class

**Week 11: (April 4/6/8) Free will and moral responsibility 1**

Chisolm, "Human Freedom and the Self"  
Ballard, "The Subliminal Man"

**Week 12: (April 11/13/15) Free will and moral responsibility 2**

Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"  
Nagel, "Moral Luck"

**Week 13: (April 18/20/22) Punishment**

Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"  
Rachels, "Responsibility and Punishment"

Wednesday: Discussion guide assignment and rubric handed out in class

Friday: Sign-up for discussion day at beginning of class

**Week 14: (April 25/27/29) Arguments from analogy in practical ethics**

Readings TBD

Friday: Final exam review sheet handed out in class

**Week 15: (May 2/4/6) Student-led discussions on topics in practical ethics**

Monday: Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People"  
Wednesday: Huemer, "Is there a right to immigrate?"  
Friday: LaFollette, "Licensing Parents Revisited"

**Week 16: Final Exam**

Thursday, May 12 1:30 - 3:30, in our normal classroom

## Course Policies

**Accessibility.** I want this course (in both content and assessment) to be accessible to all students regardless of impairments and disabilities. If you have a disability that I can better accommodate, please consider meeting with me to talk about it. Improvements to accessibility are improvements to the course, and students in future semesters will owe you a debt of gratitude (that will undoubtedly go unpaid) for taking the time to give me your feedback on accessibility.

Testing accommodations require you to register with Disability Services. Reach them by phone at 612-626-1333 or visit their website: <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>

**Attendance.** Your attendance is required during the last week of the semester, when we will use student-written discussion guides. Aside from those days, I will not take attendance at our full-class meetings.

It is characteristic of good students that they come to class. The active practice of critical reading and thinking skills, the development of which is the primary goal of the course, cannot be replicated alone in your room. The serious consideration of a variety of perspectives only happens when you are present to hear other perspectives in the first place.

If you choose not to attend a given meeting, you will miss important content and opportunities for practice. Dongwoo, Michael, and I will not re-cap for you the day you missed; please don't ask. If you make a habit of staying home, your progress (and your participation grade) will suffer.

**Late work.** Weekly short writing, due at the beginning of class on Mondays, will not be accepted late for any reason. The rough draft of the long paper will not be accepted late for any reason. You may turn in the discussion guide and the final draft of the long paper after the due date at a penalty of ten points per day late.

**Emailed papers.** If you anticipate an excused absence on a day course material is due, please talk to me and your TA ahead of time to make arrangements to turn in your work via email. We will only accept emailed work that we've discussed and approved ahead of time.

**Electronic Devices.** Please do not use any electronics during lectures. No phones, no laptops, no tablets, no nothing. If you need to use a device in class (if you have a sick kid at home who might need to call you, for example) please let me know before class starts.

**Small group discussions.** Small-group discussions are the core of this course. Disagreement is an inevitable and desirable consequence of any serious philosophical discussion. Disagreement can be fruitful, it can be fun, and it can also be frustrating. I expect you to be—always and without fail—respectful, thoughtful, and kind in discussion, even in the face of frustrating disagreements. This is not hard to do. If at any point you feel the temptation to sneer, or get angry or hurt, or raise your voice, take a moment to calm down. Then offer, as clearly and generously as you can, the reasons you disagree with the trend of the discussion.

**Writing support.** Most of your course grade is based on your writing. Don't hesitate to seek writing help from me, Michael, Dongwoo, or any of UMN's writing support programs.

- Student Writing Support: 306b Lind Hall (and other locations) (612.625.1893) <http://writing.umn.edu>. This is a service offering face-to-face tutoring for all University of Minnesota students by appointment in Lind Hall and walk-in at satellites around campus. Two

ESL specialists and one IT specialist are on staff. There is also online writing help.

- Non-native speakers in need of assistance or guidance with writing concerns can contact Sheryl Holt, the Coordinator for Non-Native Speakers ([holtx001@tc.umn.edu](mailto:holtx001@tc.umn.edu)). 337 Nolte Center (612.624.4524).

**Scholastic Dishonesty.** Quoth the Board of Regents: "Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying of data, research procedures, or data analysis."

The upshot, in the context of this course: do not plagiarize. Do not copy another author's words, or paraphrase another author's ideas without citing your sources. Citations should be thorough enough to allow your readers to locate the passage you are quoting or paraphrasing. There is no shame in understanding, appreciating, and incorporating another writer's views, so long as you give credit where it's due. There is much shame in passing off someone else's work as your own.

If I discover you've plagiarized any part of any assignment, you'll get a zero for that assignment (or, in the case of weekly writing, a zero for your entire weekly writing grade) and I'll file a report with the University.