

PHIL 106 Language, Knowledge, and Power · Fall 2019 · Syllabus

Course Time and Place: MWF 10:00–10:50 / 11:00–11:50 @ Wyatt 313

Instructor: Shen-yi Liao (sliao@pugetsound.edu)

Office Hours: Tu 13:00–13:50, W 09:00–09:50, or by appointment @ Wyatt 323

Requirements Satisfied: Social Scientific Approaches Core, KNOW; Philosophy Major, Philosophy Minor

I Course Description and Goals

This course investigates how systems of power (such as racism, sexism, and ableism) structure two significant areas of individual and collective behavior: language and knowledge. It shows the necessity of philosophizing in critical engagement with the world by connecting social phenomena with social scientific theories. It also shows philosophy's strength in making fundamental inquiries and bridging academic disciplines by drawing on diverse types of empirical evidence.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes. Assignments are designed to help students to develop skills that are essential to critical engagement with the world. Students will practice analyzing and critiquing reasons for complex views in their directed responses. Students will produce reasoned arguments in their essays. Students will hone thoughtful communication in their participation.

2 Assignments and Grades

Low-stakes assignments will be **minimally graded** as satisfactory (100/100) or unsatisfactory (0/100). *High-stakes assignments* will be traditionally graded as A (95/100), A- (91.7/100), B+ (88.3/100), and so on.

For the course grade, the numerical grades of the assignments will be averaged and converted back to letter grades using the scale of A (≥ 93.3), A- (≥ 90), B+ (≥ 86.7), and so on.

Directed Responses (20%)

Directed responses facilitate continual and scaffolded learning, especially for developing skills relevant to analyzing arguments. Before most classes, you will submit text-directed responses that involve thesis identification, argument reconstruction, passage analysis, etc. (See Zara Bain's "[How to Read Philosophy](#)".) These ≤ 300 -word responses are **due on Canvas before 00:01 on the day of class**. In class, you will also sometimes complete discussion- or activity-directed responses.

Throughout the semester, there will be approximately 22 directed responses collected. *Directed responses are minimally graded, and you have two free passes each semester for unexpected life events.*

Preparation & Participation (10%)

It is very hard, if not impossible, to learn philosophy without constantly asking questions and working through difficult problems. Your preparation and participation are required for class discussions, group activities, etc. See NYU Philosophy's "[Guidelines for Respectful, Constructive, and Inclusive Philosophical Discussion](#)" for norms and expectations. Your grade depends on both the quantity and quality of your participation. *Preparation & participation is minimally graded for each half of the semester.*

Argumentative Essays (35% / 35%)

You will write two **1500-word** essays that connects philosophical concepts to empirical evidence. (We will talk about expectations very early on.) The first will be due **October 18th** and focus on one of the theoretical texts from the language units. The second will be due **December 9th** and focus on two theoretical texts. *The argumentative essays are traditionally graded.*

3 Course Policies

Learning Environment

You are responsible for helping to foster a safe, supportive, engaging, and productive learning environment. You must come to class prepared, having carefully read and thought about the assigned texts, and ready to raise questions about the material. You must also be mindful of how the topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class and treat your classmates with respect and courtesy.

Given the importance of class discussions, classroom continuity is essential. You are expected to attend class consistently. If you have two unexcused absences out of any four consecutive classes, I will withdraw you from the course.

There is strong evidence (see [this summary in *The New York Times*](#)) that in-class use of devices such as laptops and smartphones is generally not conducive to learning. Be mindful that these electronic devices not only distract their users, but also other members of the class.

Communication

Please check your Puget Sound email at least once a day for communication about the course.

You are *always* welcome to come see me at [office hours](#). I'm happy to meet with you individually or in groups about an assigned text, a topic touched on in class discussion, any other class-related matters, and your other intellectual and life pursuits. If you can't make my regular office hours, email me and we'll set up another time to meet. However, I expect you to make good use of the time if we have made a special appointment by, for example, making sure that you arrive on time and prepared for the meeting.

While office hours are best for substantive discussions, I am happy to answer other inquiries via email. (If you're not sure how best to email your professors, follow the guides from [Inside Higher Ed](#) or [Sound Writing](#).) It might take me up to 48 hours to get back to you. Please set your expectations accordingly.

Accessibility and Accommodation

I will make every effort to make this course [accessible by default](#) to students with different learning styles and abilities. In addition, I will also strive to offer accommodation for students with different learning styles and abilities in other ways. Please feel free to talk to me at any point of the course so we can discuss the best ways that I can offer accommodation.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy Perno, Director of the [Office of Accessibility and Accommodations](#), 105 Howarth, 253.879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity

To use somebody else's words or ideas without citing their origin is plagiarism and is seriously penalized. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please consult [the university's guidelines](#), [CWL's guide](#), [the library's guide](#), or come talk to me.

Time Management

For directed responses, there are no make-ups or extensions. The two free passes builds in flexibility by default, for unexpected life events.

For argumentative essays, the equivalent of 1/3 of a letter grade (that is, from A to A-) will be deducted for each 24 hours—rounded up) that it is late. You have a 24 hour grace period *once* in the semester. No work that is more than 3 days late will be accepted, with the following exceptions.

If you need an extension, email me as soon possible with your reason and propose a new due date. Barring verifiable emergencies, extensions must be requested at least 48 hours before the assignment is due. Whether you have asked for an extension or not, if you think you are about to miss a due date, email me whatever you have. Then, stay in contact with me so we can make and execute a plan for you to get back on track and finish the assignment.

Copyright and Fair Use

The university says, "Course materials are for educational purposes only and limited to students enrolled in the course. They are protected by copyright law and may not be copied, downloaded, stored, transmitted, shared, or changed in any way." You can consult the library's guides on [copyright](#) and [fair use](#).

More broadly, you may be interested in *Free Culture: How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity* (2004), which documents and critiques the ways in which copyright laws have created a legal and economic environment that threatens the progress of arts and science. Or you may also be interested in "Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto" (2008) and "In Solidarity with Library Genesis and Sci-Hub" (2015), which highlight the acuity of this problem for academic publications.

Emergency Response Procedures

Please review the university's [emergency preparedness and response procedures](#). Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class and laboratory buildings.

If building evacuation becomes necessary (such as during an [earthquake](#)), meet me at the designated gathering area so I can account for your presence. Then wait for further instructions. Do not return to the building or classroom until advised by a university emergency response representative.

If confronted by an act of violence, be prepared to make quick decisions to protect your safety. Flee the area by running away from the source of danger if you can safely do so. If this is not possible, shelter in place by securing classroom or lab doors and windows, closing blinds, and turning off room lights. Lie on the floor out of sight and away from windows and doors. Place cell phones or pagers on vibrate so that you can receive messages quietly. Wait for further instructions.

4 Schedule of Topics and Readings

All theoretical texts are in the course pack, which you must purchase from the university bookstore and bring to each class. Other material, denoted by *, are online and linked from the syllabus.

09/04		—doing philosophy—
09/06		—syllabus and logistics—
Power		
09/09	<i>Social Construction</i>	Mills, “But What Are You Really?": The Metaphysics of Race”
09/11		Mills, “But What Are You Really?": The Metaphysics of Race”
09/13		* Radiolab, “ Ally's Choice ” [podcast]
09/16	<i>Systems of Power</i>	Manne, “Ameliorating Misogyny”
09/18		Manne, “Ameliorating Misogyny”
09/20		—discussion of Brown & Haley lectures / writing philosophy papers—
Language		
09/23	<i>Sociolinguistics</i>	Fanon, “The Negro and Language”
09/25		* Rickford, “ Rachel Jeantel's Language in the Zimmerman Trial ”
09/27		—use of secondary sources—
09/30		Dembroff & Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze”
10/02		* Manion, “ The Performance of Transgender Inclusion ”
		* Spade, “ We Still Need Pronoun Go-Rounds ”
10/04		—they say, I say—
10/07	<i>Speech Acts</i>	Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games”
10/09		Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games”
10/11		* Rajagopalan, Vo, & Aung Naing Soe, “ How Facebook Failed the Rohingya ”
10/14		McGowan, “On ‘Whites Only’ Signs and Racist Hate Speech”
10/16		* FIRE, “ Hate Speech ”
10/18		NO CLASS paper due
Knowledge		
10/23	<i>Testimonial Injustice</i>	Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing”
10/25		Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing”
10/28		* Buckley, Mozur, & Ramzy, “ How China Turned a City into a Prison ”
10/30		Davis, “Typecasts, Tokens, and Spokespersons”
11/01		* Schmidt, “ Gendered Language in Teacher Reviews ” [interactive]
11/04	<i>Hermeneutical Injustice</i>	Fricker, “Hermeneutical Injustice”
11/06		Fricker, “Hermeneutical Injustice”
11/08		NO CLASS play with Google nGram Viewer [interactive]
11/11		Barnes, “Disability Pride”
11/13		Barnes, “Disability Pride”
11/15		* Murray, “ The Concept of Normal ” [captioned video]
11/18		Jenkins, “Rape and Domestic Abuse Myths as Hermeneutical Injustices”
11/20		Jenkins, “Rape and Domestic Abuse Myths as Hermeneutical Injustices”
11/22		—compare and contrast—
11/25		—workshopping paper—
12/02	<i>Standpoint Theory</i>	Du Bois, “Of the Ruling of Men”
12/04		Du Bois, “Of the Ruling of Men”
12/06		* O'Connor, “ Women in Science ” [podcast: 2:45-8:45]
12/09	<i>Current Debates</i>	* Nguyen, “ Escape the Echo Chamber ”
12/11		* Rini, “ Should We Rename Institutions That Honor Dead Racists? ”

The syllabus is subject to change based on class interest and progress. This is the version of **December 1, 2019**.