

# Intro to Philosophy 2

## Course information:

Course #:	PHIL 201
Term:	Winter 2021
Course pre-requisites:	None
Course schedule:	Mon/Tue/Thu 13:35-14:25
Course location:	Online (see below)

## Instructor information:

Name:	Dr. Oran Magal
Email:	<a href="mailto:oran.magal@mcgill.ca">oran.magal@mcgill.ca</a>
Office hours:	To be announced



## **Philosophy: The Love of Wisdom**

Philosophy, at its roots, can be seen as a search for wisdom: a quest for better understanding of ourselves, the world, and how to live guided by this understanding – in other words, how to live “philosophically”. In this course, we will examine how this idea is carried out in three of the world’s major philosophical traditions: in classical Greece, China, and India.

However, these ideas are not merely historical curiosities: they are alive and meaningful in our world today. To show this, we will read works by recent and contemporary philosophers who are responding to these ancient ideas and are in a dialogue with them. For more details, see below.

## **Required Course Materials:**

Most readings will be provided as PDFs on *MyCourses* or as e-books through McGill’s library. One book will need to be purchased: *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., translated by Grube and revised by Cooper, Hackett Publishing, 2001. The book is already available for purchase (cost: about 10\$) from *The Word* bookstore at 469 Milton Street; you can purchase it online, either for curbside pickup (the store is within walking distance from McGill’s campus) or for shipping at a flat postal rate: <https://www.wordbookstore.ca/>

## Instructional Method:

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has compelled courses to move from the classroom to an online-only format for this semester. The course will be taught through a combination of pre-recorded lectures, 'live' review/Q&A/office hours sessions with the instructor, and 'live' tutorial conferences with the TAs, who will also have office hours availability.

The lectures will be pre-recorded and posted on MyCourses. For the best results, students should read the assigned materials before watching the lecture, just as expected for a normal in-class lecture. The only exception is the very first lecture, which will be delivered live at class time (Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 13:35-14:25), in which we will have a chance to meet each other and to go over this course outline. This lecture will be recorded for those who cannot attend or who join the class at a later point.

**Tutorial conferences with the TAs:** starting on the third week of lectures and until the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the course, inclusive, the Friday lecture is replaced by tutorial conferences with a TA. These will take place online, as well; the details will be provided separately. Attendance in these conferences is required, and there will be assignments linked with the conferences (see below). Students who cannot attend some or all conferences due to a serious reason outside their control should contact the instructor as soon as possible to work out alternative work for the same credit. Please note that these live video classes with the TAs will not be recorded.

# Schedule of Topics and Readings

## Part 1: Classical Greek and Hellenistic Philosophy

We start with Socrates in ancient Athens, on trial for his life largely because of the way he pursued philosophy. Socrates accepts his death sentence and execution with philosophical resignation; we will work to understand how and why he does so, and contrast this with an important 20<sup>th</sup> century movement of *resisting* injustice rather than accepting it with resignation: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail* and the call to civil disobedience.

We shall then consider two other schools of 'philosophical living' during this period: Stoicism and Epicureanism.

Finally, we will discuss his great rivals, the Sophists, whom the contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that we still encounter today under different names. Along the way, we will grapple with central themes that run through the entire history of philosophy in the west: self-examination and self-deception, irony, authenticity, and the challenge of relativism.

(See detailed table on next page)

Week	Dates	Topic	Required readings + assignments
0	Thu Jan 7 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction	Please read the syllabus
1	Mon Jan 11 <sup>th</sup> Tue Jan 12 <sup>th</sup> Thu Jan 14 <sup>th</sup>	Getting to know Socrates through Plato's writings: - Socratic irony - "The examined life"	<b>Plato</b> , <i>Euthyphro</i> <b>Plato</b> , <i>Apology</i> <u>Optional</u> : Emily Wilson, <i>The Death of Socrates</i> , Chapter 1: "Socrates' Philosophy". Harvard University Press, 2007.
2	Mon Jan 18 <sup>th</sup> Tue Jan 19 <sup>th</sup> Thu Jan 21 <sup>st</sup>	Socrates & Dr. Martin Luther King in dialogue: - Moral values and the law	<b>Plato</b> , <i>Crito</i> <b>Dr. M. L. King, Jr.</b> , "A Letter from Birmingham Jail"
3	Mon Jan 25 <sup>th</sup> Tue Jan 26 <sup>th</sup> Thu Jan 28 <sup>th</sup>	Living – and dying – like a philosopher: Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, and others	<b>Plato</b> , <i>Phaedo</i> (only the scene of Socrates' death) Peter Adamson, <i>Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds</i> , Oxford Univ. Press, 2015, pp. 3-16, 31-44, 73-79 (available as e-book through McGill's library) <b>*** Conferences start this week ***</b>
4	Mon Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> Tue Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thu Feb 4 <sup>th</sup>	Sophists and Relativism: a philosophical rival ancient and modern	<b>Martha Nussbaum</b> (1994) "Skepticism about Practical Reason in Literature and the Law" <u>Optional</u> : Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I (excerpt) <u>Optional</u> : Martha Nussbaum (1985), "Sophistry about Conventions" <b>Reading assignment #1</b>

## Part 2: Classical China

The idea of humans as 'social animals' is central to many traditions of thought. "It is not good that man should be alone", we read in *Genesis* 2:18. The great philosopher Aristotle, in ancient Greece, defined humans as a **social animal**. Our focus in this unit, however, will be on the classical Chinese tradition of philosophy, and how the conflict between individualism and the demands of society plays out in it. Relatedly, we will consider the debate, within this tradition, about **human nature**: again, a central question to all traditions of philosophy. Are people by nature good or bad? Or perhaps the very categories of 'good' and 'bad' are the problem? The way we answer these questions will have direct consequences for the way we ought to live our lives.

Week	Dates	Topic	Required readings + assignments
5	Mon Feb 8 <sup>th</sup> Tue Feb 9 <sup>th</sup> Thu Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>	Confucianism: - Historical background - Meeting the founder	Selections from <b>Kongzi (Confucius)</b> , Edward Slingerland (transl.), <i>Analects</i> , Hackett, 2003
6	Mon Feb 15 <sup>th</sup> Tue Feb 16 <sup>th</sup> Thu Feb 18 <sup>th</sup>	The next generation: Mengzi (Mencius), Xunzi, and human nature	Selections from <b>Mengzi (Mencius)</b> , Irene Bloom (transl.), <i>Mencius</i> , Columbia Univ. Press, 2009  Selections from <b>Xunzi</b> , in P. J. Ivanhoe (ed.), <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed., Hackett, 2006, pp. 269-271, 277-278  <b>Reading assignment #2</b>
7	Mon Feb 22 <sup>nd</sup> Tue Feb 23 <sup>rd</sup> Thu Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>	Counterpoint – Daoism: Sages, madmen, useless trees, happy fish, and “The Way”	Selections from <b>Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu)</b> , Burton Watson (transl. & ed.), <i>The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu</i> . Columbia University Press, 1968

### Part 3: Ancient and Classical India

A number of philosophical schools hold that the key to life as it should be lived is to discover your **true self**. However, there is profound disagreement over what precisely this means... We will discuss the conception of self that arose in ancient India in the context of the Vedic religion, in which the greatest achievement was to discover our hidden self (the Atman), and in so doing, to realize its fundamental identity with the absolute (the Brahman): to become “one with everything”, thousands of years before it became a modern-day cliché.

8	Mon Mar 8 <sup>th</sup> Tue Mar 9 <sup>th</sup> Thu Mar 11 <sup>th</sup>	Upanishads, part 1: - The “hidden self” - The reluctant teacher	Excerpts from the <b>Chandogya Upanishad</b> , from Olivelle, P. (1998). <i>The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation</i> , pp. 273-287 (odd pages only – it is a bilingual edition)  <u>Optional</u> : <b>Ganeri, J.</b> (2007). <i>The concealed art of the soul: Theories of self and practices of truth in Indian ethics and epistemology</i> , Ch. 1: “Hidden in a Cave: The Upaniṣadic Self”
9	Mon Mar 15 <sup>th</sup> Tue Mar 16 <sup>th</sup> Thu Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	Upanishads, part 2: - Existence after death - Atman (self) & Brahman	Excerpts from the <b>Katha Upanishad</b> , from S. Radhakrishnan & C. A. Moore (eds.), <i>A Source Book in Indian Philosophy</i> (1957), pp. 42-51  ** (Continued on the next page) **

		- How can you teach what cannot be said in words?	<p><u>Optional</u>: <b>Ganeri, J.</b> (2007). <i>The concealed art of the soul: Theories of self and practices of truth in Indian ethics and epistemology</i>, Ch. 5: “Words That Break: Can an Upaniṣad State the Truth?”</p> <p><b>Reading assignment #3</b></p>
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## Part 4: A Selection from Modern Philosophy

In this final part of our course, we will consider texts from 20<sup>th</sup> century and current day philosophers, all of which deal with the connections between philosophy and various aspects of life, and which do so while building on and responding to some of the ideas we examined earlier in the course.

<b>10</b>	Mon Mar 22 <sup>nd</sup> Tue Mar 23 <sup>rd</sup> Thu Mar 25 <sup>th</sup>	On anger and justice in politics	<p><b>Amia Srinivasan</b>, “The Aptness of Anger”, in <i>The Journal of Political Philosophy</i> Vol. 26 No. 2 (June 2018), pp. 123-144.</p> <p><b>Reading assignment #4</b></p>
<b>11</b>	Mon Mar 29 <sup>th</sup> Tur Mar 30 <sup>th</sup> Thu April 1 <sup>st</sup>	On the suppression of a fundamental mode of cognition	<p><b>Jan Zwicky</b>, <i>Alkibiades' Love: Essays in Philosophy</i>. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015. Chapter 4: “Dream Logic and the Politics of Interpretation”, pp. 87-105.</p> <p><b>Reading assignment #5</b></p>
<b>12</b>	<del>Mon April 5<sup>th</sup></del> Tue April 6 <sup>th</sup> Thu April 8 <sup>th</sup>	On transformative experiences	<p><b>Laurie Ann Paul</b>, “What You Can’t Expect When You’re Expecting”, <i>Res Philosophica</i> Vol. 92 No. 2 (April 2015), pp. 149-170</p> <p><b>Reading assignment #6</b></p> <p>** Note: Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup> is a holiday **</p> <p>*** <b>Last week of conferences</b> ***</p>
<b>13</b>	Mon April 12 <sup>th</sup> Tue April 13 <sup>th</sup> Thu April 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Optional bonus topic</b> (will not be included in the final exam, to be determined)	<p>Readings: optional, to be announced</p> <p>Note 1: no conferences, only lectures this week</p> <p>Note 2: Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup> follows a Monday schedule</p>

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# Means of Evaluation

The final grade in the course comprises the following (explanation below):

Assignment	Due date	% of final grade
Reading assignments (Best 5 out of 6)	Feb. 1 <sup>st</sup> , Feb. 15 <sup>th</sup> , March 15 <sup>th</sup> , March 22 <sup>nd</sup> , March 29 <sup>th</sup> , April 6 <sup>th</sup>	50 (5x 10% each)
Conference-related assignments	Weekly	10 (8x 1.25% each)
Final exam (Take-home, open book & notes)	Exam period	40

## Reading assignments

You will need to complete **5 out of 6** of the reading assignments that will be distributed on MyCourses throughout the term. (You are welcome to complete all six, in which case the best five will be used to calculate your final mark.)

Each reading assignment will be available at least one week before it is due. Please note that because the answer to the reading assignment will be discussed in class after the due-date, **late reading assignments will not be accepted unless you have written permission from the instructor**. If there are special circumstances (e.g., being sick for more than one day, etc.), the instructor may assign an alternative reading assignment.

## Conference-related assignments

Starting from the third week of classes, the Friday lecture is replaced by tutorial conferences (there will be an announcement on *MyCourses* to remind you). In each such conference there will be a short in-class assignment to do and to submit. You are expected to complete **8 out of 10 such assignments**, and to do so you must attend your conference. (Note: unless in-person teaching resumes, conferences will be held by video on Zoom.) These assignments will **not** be distributed on *MyCourses*. You can miss up to two conferences for any reason. If you have a valid reason for missing more than two conferences, please contact the instructor and we will find alternative work for the same credit.

## Final exam

The due-date for the exam is the date that will appear in the exam schedule determined by McGill, and this is when the exam needs to be handed in. The exam will be posted in the

assignments tab in *MyCourses* at least 72 hours before the due date, but I will do my best to post it earlier than that, giving more time in which to write it.

## Policy on extensions and late work

If you have a valid reason to ask for an extension, please **write to me** (oran.magal@mcgill.ca), not your TAs, **before the relevant work is due**. As a general rule, extensions will be given only for medical reasons or serious personal/family circumstances.

## How to Submit Your Work

**Submitting work through *MyCourses*:** reading assignments and essay instructions will be distributed through *MyCourses* (in the ‘assignments’ tab of the course page), and students should submit their work through the same part of the course page on *MyCourses*. Do not send your work by email to the instructor or the TAs unless you are specifically asked to do so.

**Important: submit all work in PDF or DOCX (Microsoft Word) file formats.** Microsoft Word (for PC or Mac) is provided to you for free through McGill. If you are using any other software, simply use *export* or *save as* to save your work as a PDF prior to submitting it. **Files submitted in other formats will not be graded, and will not count as work submitted.**

# McGill Policies and Statements

## Language of Submission

*In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.*

*Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).*

## Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information)

## **Varia**

Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process. Please do not record the lectures without instructor's permission.

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.