Introduction to the Course
Welcome!
Let’s introduce ourselves using this template:

• My last name is _____________
  (so I can find you on the roster)

• You can call me _____________
  (first name or nickname
  – whatever name you’d like me to use for you in this class)

• Finish any one of these prompts:
  – I’m taking this class because ____________________________.
  – When I hear the word “ethics”, I think of ________________.
  – When I hear the phrase “critical thinking”, I think of _____.
  – A topic I’d like to discuss at some point this semester
    is ________________________________.
A quick class demographics poll:

- How many freshmen? sophomores? juniors? seniors?
- …transfer students?
- …international students?
- …first-generation college students?
- …different boroughs of residence?
- …different home states?
- …different home countries?
- …students who speak English as a second language?
- …students who took extra time between high school and college?
- …students who work while attending school (including fulfilling obligations to family)?
What is (Western) Philosophy?

- It is **a method** of:
  1. examining the world by calling everything into question
  2. articulating a variety of viewpoints on whatever is under investigation
  3. comparing & evaluating competing viewpoints

- **It operates according to rules & norms** developed to:
  a) advance our collective pursuit of truth and understanding
  b) keep things civil when disagreements arise

- **It can take anything as its subject matter.**
  - Boundaries between philosophy & other academic disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, political science) can be very blurry
What is Ethics?

- **Ethics**, a.k.a. *moral philosophy*, examines human thinking & actions along dimensions like good/bad, right/wrong, acceptable/unacceptable, & praiseworthy/blameworthy.

  ➢ Basically, it’s the study of what it means to be a good person, do the right thing, and treat other people well.

Each of you already uses moral reasoning on a daily basis, whenever you choose how to act or make judgments about other people’s actions.

- Studying ethics will help you clarify your thinking, make more informed decisions, and better understand other people’s reasoning & choices.

  » This course will not tell you how to think or how to act:

    ➢ rather, the class provides you with tools (new concepts, vocabulary, viewpoints, etc.) that will empower you to think through moral questions & problems that arise in your own life.
What is Critical Thinking?

- “Critical thinking” describes a standard of excellence for intellectual activity: what it means to reason well.
  - There are many skills, habits, & activities associated with critical thinking, but some of the most commonly emphasized are:
    - determining when a given conclusion is warranted from the evidence available
    - determining whether or not evidence comes from a reliable, credible source free of illegitimate biases
      - (not like this: video: bit.ly/2t24A9K)
    - thinking for oneself, instead of automatically adopting the views/beliefs held by others in your community
    - steering clear of common errors in reasoning, in order to avoid being swayed or misled by others
In this class, we are going to treat the standards for “critical thinking” as a subject of ongoing debate.

- Philosophers have developed many theories & concepts to articulate conflicting views about what it means to reason well.

Throughout the semester,

- we’ll learn about many different considerations that come into play when we’re trying to optimize our reasoning
  - some of which are in tension with each other.

- Learning these theories, concepts, & considerations will help us to understand real-world disagreements about how we should think & what we ought to believe.
What happens when we combine Ethics & Critical Thinking?

• If all goes well, we will improve our reasoning about topics of ongoing debate that involve moral disagreements, such as:
  – **criminal justice** (proper police activity, appropriate sentencing, acceptable prison conditions, rights for former criminals…)
  – **relationships & family** (responsibilities to elders, gender roles & expectations, being a good friend or significant other, marriage rights, responsible parenting…)
  – **personal rights/freedoms** (dietary choices, buying habits, reproductive choices, media consumption, weapons ownership, internet privacy, healthcare choices…)
  – **government activity** (e.g., policies on immigration & asylum for refugees, military intervention in foreign conflicts, surveillance of citizens, tax expenditures, social services…)

The specific topics we focus on at the end of the semester will reflect your interests.

– The new knowledge you gain & the skills you develop in this class should be applicable to pretty much any moral conflict you encounter in the future.

  » For even more insight into moral reasoning, take PHI 1700!
Course Topics

• **Meta-Ethics:** the investigation of what morality is
  - nativism vs. empiricism
  - realism vs. anti-realism
  - objectivism vs. subjectivism
  - universalism vs. relativism
  - rationalism vs. sentimentalism, intuitionism
  - free will & moral responsibility
  - retributivism
  - moral luck
  - situationism

• **Normative Ethics:** the study of how we should act
  - autonomy, consent (vs. paternalism)
  - utility
  - happiness
  - flourishing
  - virtue
  - moral duty
  - altruism, beneficence care
  - equality (of outcomes, opportunities, consideration…)

• **Normative Epistemology:** the study of how we should think & what we should believe; principles of informal reasoning
  - deductive, inductive, & abductive reasoning
  - virtue epistemology, intellectual character
  - the ethics of belief, coherentism
  - doxastic voluntarism
  - the problem of induction, falsificationism
  - the paradox of dogmatism
  - social epistemology
  - mental heuristics & cognitive biases

• **Formal Logic:** the study of deductive inference
  - converting natural language to formal language
  - validity & soundness

• **Informal Logic:** analysis of everyday arguments
  - extracting arguments from natural language
  - fallacies
  - rhetorical tricks (using language & numbers)

• **Applied Ethics:** the use of ethical reasoning to understand real-world moral problems
  - TBD, based on your interests
Course Objectives

- In this class, you will:
  - develop mastery of theories & concepts supplied by philosophers to help us:
    - understand the nature of morality & decide how to act ethically
    - understand the nature of reasoning & determine how to think/believe responsibly
  - examine & correct your own intellectual conduct using the tools of normative epistemology
  - practice adopting perspectives other than your own and interpreting others’ arguments charitably
  - improve your ability to extract arguments embedded in natural language (text and speech),
    - and gain the ability to evaluate these arguments using criteria of formal & informal logic
  - improve the clarity & persuasiveness of written & spoken arguments, and develop confidence in expressing yourself through these media
Course Format

Website: bit.ly/philosophy1100

- Everything you need to complete the course is on the website!
  - Readings, assignments, & exams are all posted as PDFs, Google Docs, or Google Forms
    - There is NO textbook!
  - All assignments will be submitted online
  - I’ll notify you of updates to the course schedule via email.
Course Requirements

✔ take a syllabus quiz **(DUE NEXT WEEK, Feb. 4th)**
  – …to ensure that you know my policies & how this course works.

✔ attend each class session & participate in class activities
  – Slides for each course session will be posted to the website before class.
  – Sources for the lecture content are posted to the website as recommended readings.
  – Participating in discussions is highly recommended for optimal learning.
    – Whether you contribute to class discussions or not, you should demonstrate an ongoing commitment to engaging seriously with the course material while you’re in the classroom (e.g., responding to free-writing prompts, collaborating with classmates during small-group work).

➢ Talking to your prof. about course material (not just about assignments), in person or via email, also counts as participation.
Course Requirements (cont.)

✓ write 3 reading responses to assigned texts (through Google Forms)
  – You’ll read a brief article (meant to complement our lecture topics), & then respond to specific questions intended to help you comprehend the author’s view & practice expressing your thoughts in writing.

✓ complete 3 online exams & 1 quiz (through Google Forms)
  – These are designed to be like problem sets, and will consist of matching, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, & short essay questions.
  – You may work with classmates to answer the exam questions; however, you must compose your written answers independently from your classmates in order to get full credit for your work.

• I grade based on how well you demonstrate your own ideas & your own understanding.

➢ You will not receive full credit for written answers that are identical to, paraphrases of, or otherwise derived from the answers submitted by another student.
GRADES are calculated as follows:

- **exams**: 50% (3 x 16.66% each)
- **logic quiz**: 10%
- **syllabus quiz & reading responses**: 20% (4 x 5% each)
- **attendance**: 10%
- **participation & conduct**: 10%

Extra Credit opportunities may be offered.

- To check your grade, open the “Receipts & Grades Sheet” linked on the website (& use tabs on bottom left to find your section!)

Course Policies & Etiquette

- **LATE POLICY**: A deduction is taken from the max. grade for the assignment
  - 5% off if submitted up to two calendar days after the due date,
  - 10% off if three days or more.

  ➢ Submitting assignments on time is best, but submitting late (by May 14th) is **much** better than not submitting at all.
Course Policies & Etiquette (cont.)

- Check your email regularly for course updates.
- Feel free to email me if you have questions or concerns about the course.
  - Please include “PHI 1100” in the subject line of your message. I will do my best to respond promptly.
- Please arrive on time & ready to take notes.
- Please do not pack up to leave until class is over.
- Eating & drinking are permitted.
- Laptops & tablets are permitted for note-taking.
  - I will ask you to put devices away if I can tell that they’re not helping you learn.
- Please silence cell phones & keep them in your bag during class.
Attendance

• Regular attendance is expected.
  - I’ll occasionally collect materials from in-class activities that will serve as a record of attendance.
  - Please email me before class if you know you will not be present.

• You are responsible for all course material, including what’s covered in lectures you miss.
  - Refer to the PowerPoint slides & consult classmates about material covered in any lectures you’re unable to attend.
  - Visit my Office Hours (Mon/Weds 10:45am-12:15pm, Tues/Thurs 12:30-2pm) if you need extra help catching up.

Accessibility

• I strive to ensure that every student can succeed in this course.

• Some students may need additional accommodations for the best possible introduction to philosophy.
  - Come talk to me if you’re encountering difficulties: together, we can develop some strategies for success.
  - The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (VC 2-272) can provide “reasonable accommodations” for students who register for services.
Philosophical discussion, worst case scenario:

- “I think that X”  \( X = \) any statement
  - “That’s preposterous. You’re dumb.”
- “No it’s not! You’re dumb!
  Only an idiot would disagree with X!”

  ...and so on, to the toxic depths of internet comments hell

Much better:

- “I think that X”
  - “Interesting. I’ve never thought of it that way. Can you try to explain why you think that X?”
- “Well, I think X because of A, B, and C…”
  - “I see. I’m not so sure about B. My impression is that…”
- “Ok. I understand your uncertainty about B now. One reason I think B is true is that…”
Course Conduct

- We must all uphold the philosophical **Principle of Charity**: *Always try your best to interpret what you read/hear in this class as a rational, reasonable claim worthy of your careful consideration.*

  - Listen to each other’s ideas with an *open mind* and with *compassion* for the individual who shares them.

- **If someone says something that seems wrong to you, ask them to clarify what they mean before dismissing their view.**

  - It’s a disservice to yourself as a philosophy student to assume that a claim you disagree with is completely baseless (not motivated by any defensible reasons or values).

  - **Try to think through the reasons why someone would believe that:**
    - you may not agree with their reasoning, but the exercise will help you understand them better and communicate more effectively with them.
Course Conduct

• You must respect the views of your classmates, no matter how drastically they may differ from your own.
  – Please take care to ensure that your language conveys appreciation & support for your fellow students’ efforts to contribute to discussion.
  ➢ We get the most out of this class when we allow as many perspectives as possible to be voiced, so we can get a sense of the full complexity of the topics we are addressing.

• Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. All communications with your classmates and professor should be courteous and professional.

• In short: Don’t Be a Jerk!
  – Every person in this room is responsible for ensuring that their speech/behavior fosters a space in which everyone feels comfortable speaking up if & when they want to.
Academic Honesty

- There is **zero tolerance for academic dishonesty** in this course, and at Baruch College in general.
  - “Cheating, forgery, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest acts undermine the college's educational mission and the students’ personal & intellectual growth.
  - Baruch students are expected to bear individual responsibility for their work, to learn the rules & definitions that underlie the practice of academic integrity, and to uphold its ideals.
  - **Ignorance of the rules is not an acceptable excuse for disobeying them.**
  - Any student who attempts to compromise or devalue the academic process will be sanctioned.”

- See [http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic_honesty.html](http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic_honesty.html)
  - Confirmed instances of cheating/plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment in question.
  - Suspected instances will result in a hold on your grade for the course until the issue is resolved with the Dean’s Office.
Definitions of Academic Dishonesty
(http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/academic/academic_honesty.html)

• **“Cheating** is the attempted or unauthorized use of materials, information, notes, study aids, devices or communication during an academic exercise. Examples include:
  
  – Copying from another student during an examination or allowing another to copy your work.
  
  – Unauthorized collaborating on a take home assignment or examination.
  
  – Using unauthorized notes during a closed book examination.
  
  – Taking an examination for another student.
  
  – Asking or allowing another student to take an examination for you.
  
  – Changing a corrected exam and returning it for more credit.
  
  – Submitting substantial portions of the same paper to two classes without consulting the second instructor.
  
  – Preparing answers or writing notes in a blue book (exam booklet) before an examination.
  
  – Allowing others to research and write assigned papers including the use of commercial term paper services.”
Definitions of Academic Dishonesty (cont.)

• **“Plagiarism** is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writing as your own. This includes, but is not limited to:
  – Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes.
  – Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging them.
  – Using information that is not considered common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
  – Failure to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.
  – Purchase and submission of papers from "paper mills," internet vendor sites, and other sources.”

• **Additional resources on plagiarism:**
  
  ➢ Exercises: Recognizing & Avoiding Plagiarism: [http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/exercises.cfm](http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/exercises.cfm)

  ➢ How to Paraphrase a Source: [https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase2.html](https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase2.html)
Definitions of Academic Dishonesty (cont.)

• “Obtaining an Unfair Advantage:
  – Stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining prior access to examination materials.
  – Depriving other students by stealing, destroying, defacing or concealing library materials.
  – Retaining, using or circulating examination materials that clearly indicate that they should be returned at the end of the exam.
  – Intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student's work.
  – Engaging in activities that intentionally create an unfair advantage over another student's academic work.

• Falsification of Records and Official Documents:
  – Forging signatures of authorization
  – Falsifying information on an official academic record.
  – Falsifying information on an official document such as a grade report, letter of permission, drop/add form, ID card or other college document.

• Collusion:
  – Lending assistance or failing to report witnessed acts of academic misconduct”
What Does a Philosopher Look Like?

• An important part of philosophy is exposing & analyzing our preconceptions.
  – You probably already have some preconceptions about what kind of person does philosophy: where they’re from, what they look like, how they behave, etc.

➤ EXERCISE:
Take a few minutes to draw or jot down a description of what comes to mind when you think of a philosopher.
“The 20 Most Important Philosophers of All Time” (bit.ly/2ccMWab)
“The 20 Greatest Philosophers of the 20th Century” (bit.ly/2bkFyXu)

… what gives?
Inclusiveness in Philosophy

• Philosophers often aim to derive *universal truths* about human life, which generalize across the experiences of people at all times & places.

  But *though philosophy purports to be for everyone,*
  – *historically, it has not been done by everyone*

  …which really calls into question whether philosophers of the past were equipped to capture universal truths about humanity, given their limited perspectives.

  Philosopher **Kristie Dotson** shares this story in “How is this Paper Philosophy?” (2009):

  My younger sister, Alexis Ford, once had the following conversation with her Guidance Counselor, while she was a college student at a Historically Black College.

  Counselor: Why don’t you major in Social Work?
  Alexis: Social Work sounds good, but I am interested in philosophy.
  Counselor: (Snorts) Philosophy is not for black women. That’s a white man’s game.
  Alexis: My older sister is a philosophy professor.
  Counselor: Well, she’s probably the only one and that should tell you something. (2009)
• Most texts that appear on philosophy course syllabi are written by white men.

• The vast majority of professional philosophers today are white men, and most famous philosophers from the past were, too.

➢ But the fact that something has always been a certain way is no reason to believe that it must always be that way.

➢ Also, there’s no evidence that things have always been that way for any good reason.

We must not jump to the conclusion that white men are more likely to be professional philosophers because they are better at philosophy than women & non-whites.

– There is ample support for an alternative explanation: white men are overrepresented in philosophy because other types of people have historically been excluded or alienated from the discipline.

» Fortunately, things are changing fast in philosophy, and you’re all part of a change for the better!
Philosophy should be *by & for* people of all genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, sexual orientations, etc.

- A common misconception about philosophy is that you must have *innate talent* or ‘brilliance’ to do it (Leslie et al, 2015)

  - Philosophy is challenging, but anyone can do it well by putting in the time & effort necessary to develop their skills.

  - It is absolutely normal & absolutely ok to feel confused in this class!
    - In fact, one of our goals in this class is to practice turning moments of uncertainty & confusion into *learning opportunities* (instead of a signal to give up and move on to something else).