

Louis deRosset – Spring 2025

PHIL 01110A: Introduction to Philosophy

TR 4:25-5:40, INNOV E430

Instructor: Louis.deRosset@uvm.edu

Description

This course provides an introduction to the methods and some of the issues of contemporary philosophy. No effort will be made to survey either the details of any particular school of thought, or the complete contemporary philosophical scene. Instead, you will read, think, and write about a series of issues of broad philosophical interest, including the existence of God, the freedom of the will, and the nature of persons and morality. You should leave the course knowing more about what philosophy is and how it's done. You should also have begun the development of some of the critical skills philosophers (and investigators more generally) use to address some of the most interesting and important questions people have ever asked.

Requirements

You are expected to attend all course meetings, complete all written coursework, and to participate actively in discussions. **There is no such thing as an excused absence.** If you miss class for any reason, you can receive full credit for attending by following the protocol stated below.

Your first homework assignment is to send me an email by Friday, 17 Jan at 5 PM. The format and content of the email will be specified throughout this syllabus. Here's the first specification: The subject line of the email should be 'PHIL 1110A Syllabus'.

There will be two midterms and a final exam. From time to time there will also be out-of-class quizzes. There will be regular homework assignments (which will also count as class participation). Course grades will be determined by summing using the following weights:

| | |
|--|-----|
| quizzes, homework, participation, and attendance | 40% |
| midterms | 40% |
| final | 20% |

Note that your midterms are scheduled for **6 Mar** and **8 Apr**. The final exam is scheduled for **6 May** in our regular classroom; see https://serval.uvm.edu/~rgweb/batch/final_exams_spring.html. No makeup exams will be given, unless you are participating in a religious observance, taking another exam, in the hospital, in quarantine/isolation, or in jail at the time of the exam. You will fail if you miss an exam.

You should include the following sentence in your email, so long as it is true: 'I acknowledge the dates of the exams, and I will make my travel plans for Spring Break and the end of the term to allow me to take them in person.' If the sentence is not true, you should say so in the email.

This is not a contract; I reserve the right to change relative weights and course requirements to suit your educational needs.

Office Hours

I am here to teach you. You are strongly encouraged to come by office hours, TR 10:00-11:30 for help or discussion. Office hours are offered either via teleconference or in person at 70 South Williams Street. You should book an appointment online here <https://go.uvm.edu/booklouis>. When you sign up, you will receive an email containing a link for a teleconference meeting (MSTeams). Of course, you don't have to attend via videoconference. If you make an appointment, you may also stop by my office at 70 South Williams Street, #107 to talk with

Louis deRosset – Spring 2025

me in person instead.

The email you are writing to me should include the following, so long as it is true: 'I understand when your office hours are, and how to schedule an appointment with you.' If the sentence is not true, you should say so in the email.

Readings

Readings are available on the course Brightspace site; you may login at

<https://brightspace.uvm.edu>.

The readings can be viewed with Adobe Acrobat Reader, which you can download and install free of charge. Please contact me immediately if, for any reason, you are unable to access any of the readings.

Protocol for making up absences

If you miss a class, you can make it up by completing the following steps:

- view the video lectures for the class meeting you missed on BrightSpace (<https://brightspace.uvm.edu>) under **Lectures**;
- look at the linked study questions, and ensure you can answer them;
- make an office hours appointment at <https://go.uvm.edu/booklouis> and show up;
- tell me the date of the class you missed;
- discuss the material with me.

Your email to me should include the following sentence, so long as it is true: ‘I understand that attendance is required in this course, that there are no excused absences, and what I need to do to make up any absences.’ If it is not true, you should say that in your email.

Policies and Other Information

This section on policies is for your reference.

Catamount Core AH3 Courses: This course satisfies the *AH3: Humanities* requirement of the Catamount Core Curriculum. Students completing a course fulfilling the AH3: Humanities requirement will be able to do at least three of the following:

- Recall and apply basic information and scholarly vocabulary about the cultural constructs or past events that are central to the course.
- Read primary sources for basic comprehension of their contents.
- Read secondary sources in the Humanities for basic comprehension of their contents.
- Analyze a primary source via the application of methods taught or practiced in the course.
- Analyze a secondary source in the Humanities via the application of methods taught or practiced in the course.

Catamount Core GC2 Courses: Developing Global Citizens GC2 courses develop skills necessary to participate effectively as a citizen in local communities and the world at large. To be effective and responsible members of a diverse and interconnected global community, students need to be able to communicate across cultural boundaries, to think deeply and creatively about shared responsibilities and injustices, and to collaboratively effect change. The courses in this pathway are therefore designed to impart at least one of the following core skills: language proficiency, ethical reasoning, and civic engagement.

Student Learning Accommodations: In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing ADA accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS), the office of Disability Services on campus for students. SAS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations, which are communicated to faculty in an accommodation letter. All students are strongly recommended to discuss with their faculty the accommodations they plan to use in each course. Faculty who receive Letters of Accommodation with Disability Related Flexible accommodations will need to fill out the Disability Related Flexibility Agreement. Any questions from faculty or students on the agreement should be directed to the SAS specialist who is indicated on the letter.

Contact SAS:

A170 Living/Learning Center
802-656-7753

access@uvm.edu

<https://www.uvm.edu/access>

Religious Holidays: Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

Electronic devices: No electronic devices may be used for any reason other than as an accommodation for a documented condition. If you are using an electronic device in violation of this policy, I will ask you to leave the class meeting.

General statement regarding potential changes during the semester: <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/> The University of Vermont reserves the right to make changes in the course offerings, mode of delivery, degree requirements, charges, regulations, and procedures contained herein

as educational, financial, and health, safety, and welfare considerations require, or as necessary to be compliant with governmental, accreditation, or public health directives.

Lived Name and Pronoun Information: The UVM Directory includes fields for indicating your lived name and your pronouns. Lived names (preferred names, names in use) are names that an individual wants to be known by in the University community. Entering your pronouns is strongly encouraged to help create a more inclusive and respectful campus community. To update your information, login to the UVM Directory. A preview box will allow you to see how this information will appear in other systems used on campus such as Microsoft Teams and Brightspace. More information about how to make changes to your lived name and pronouns is available in the [Knowledge Base](#).

Intellectual Property Statement/Prohibition on Sharing Academic Materials: Students are prohibited from publicly sharing or selling academic materials that they did not author (for example: class syllabus, outlines or class presentations authored by the professor, practice questions, text from the textbook or other copyrighted class materials, etc.); and students are prohibited from sharing assessments (for example homework or a take-home examination). Violations will be handled under UVM's Intellectual Property policy and Code of Academic Integrity.

Academic Integrity: The [Academic Integrity policy](#) addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.

Code of Student Conduct: UVM's [Code of Student Conduct](#) outlines conduct expectations as well as students' rights and responsibilities.

FERPA Rights Disclosure: The purpose of UVM's [FERPA Rights Disclosure](#) is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.

Final Exam Policy: The University [final exam policy](#) outlines expectations during final exams and explains timing and process of examination period.

Grade Appeals: If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in [this policy](#).

Grading: [This link](#) offers information on grading and GPA calculation.

Promoting Health & Safety: The University of Vermont's number one priority is to support a healthy and safe community:

[Center for Health and Wellbeing](#)

[Counseling & Psychiatry Services \(CAPS\)](#) Direct Phone Line: (802) 656-3340

C.A.R.E. If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the [C.A.R.E. Team website](#).

Tentative Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Midterm Exams

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 14 Jan | Introduction to Introduction to Philosophy |
| Free Will | |
| 16 Jan | Introduction to Free Will |
| 21 Jan | Intro., <i>cont.</i> |
| 23 Jan | Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , §VIII |
| 28 Jan | Hume, <i>cont.</i> |
| 30 Jan | Hume, <i>cont.</i> |
| 4 Feb | Kane, “Free Will: Ancient Dispute, New Themes” |
| 6 Feb | Kane, <i>cont.</i> |
| 11 Feb | Kane, <i>cont.</i> |
| 13 Feb | Kane, <i>cont.</i> |
| 18 Feb | Kane, <i>cont.</i> |
| God | |
| 20 Feb | Introduction to the Existence of God |
| 25 Feb | Introduction to the Existence of God, <i>cont.</i> |
| 27 Feb | Cleanup |
| 4 Mar | [Town Meeting Day] |
| 6 Mar | First Midterm |
| 11 Mar | [Spring Break] |
| 13 Mar | [Spring Break] |
| 18 Mar | Leibniz, excerpts from <i>Theodicy</i> |
| 20 Mar | Leibniz, <i>cont.</i> |
| 25 Mar | Leibniz, <i>cont.</i> |
| 27 Mar | Pascal, <i>Pensées</i> , §§231-41 |
| 1 Apr | Pascal, <i>cont.</i> |
| 3 Apr | Pascal, <i>cont.</i> |
| 8 Apr | Second midterm |
| Personal Identity | |
| 10 Apr | Introduction to Personal Identity |
| 15 Apr | Introduction to Personal Identity, <i>cont.</i> |
| 17 Apr | Locke, “Of Identity and Diversity”, from the <i>Essay</i> |
| 22 Apr | Locke, <i>cont.</i> |
| 24 Apr | Locke, <i>cont.</i> |
| 29 Apr | Reid, “Of Mr. Locke’s Account”, from <i>Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man</i> |
| Morality and Consequences | |
| 1 May | Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> |
| 6 May | Final Exam |

Louis deRosset – Spring 2025

Tentative Schedule of Reading Quizzes

[All quizzes will be announced in class and administered on Brightspace. They should be completed by the beginning of the class meeting on the indicated dates. It is very likely that we will deviate from this schedule to some significant extent.]

| | |
|---------|----------------------|
| 4 Sept | Hume Reading Quiz |
| 16 Sept | Kane Reading Quiz |
| 30 Sept | Leibniz Reading Quiz |
| 16 Oct | Pascal Reading Quiz |
| 30 Oct | Locke Reading Quiz |
| 13 Nov | Reid Reading Quiz |
| 22 Nov | Mill Reading Quiz |
| 4 Dec | Carritt Reading Quiz |

Homework and Participation: Course Bulletin Board

We will be using [Packback](#), an electronic bulletin board service, as a forum for discussion. You will be expected to contribute regularly to the bulletin board discussion. I will be reading what you write and may comment myself from time to time.

Philosophy is done in conversation with other people. I aim for you to learn philosophy by doing philosophy. That requires conversation. Practical and social considerations require that much of that conversation happen outside of class.

There will be a charge, which will be no more than \$49 (plus tax). There are no other charges associated with this course. Please let me know if this charge is a hardship.

Your email to me should include the following sentence, so long as it is true: 'I understand that regular participation in discussion on PackBack is required in this course.' If it is not true, you should say that in your email.

How to Register:

If you were on the original roster for this course as of 13 Jan, your account will have been created and added to the correct community, and you will have gotten a welcome email saying so. Otherwise, you'll have to join.

If you got a welcome email:

- I. Search your inbox for an email from help@packback.co with the subject line "Finish registration for Instructor deRosset's course." This email may be in your spam folder, so search thoroughly.
- II. Click "set account password" to get started. (In the unlikely event that you already have a Packback account, just log in.)
- III. Once you're logged in, click "join a community." When this course's community appears, click "join community"
- IV. Input payment information and follow the prompts to complete checkout.
- V. Enter the community and start asking questions.

If you did not get a welcome email:

- I. Head to <https://app.packback.co/login>.
- II. Click "Sign Up" to create an account, using your uvm.edu email address.
- III. Find our community with the community look-up key: **69T-Z3G-TJE6**
- IV. Follow steps (III.)-(V.) above to join the community.

Assessment: Your contributions to online discussion are **15%** of your course grade. Contributions will be assessed on a credit/no credit basis, according to whether you have made a good faith effort to complete the assignment. Your contributions must be entirely your own work, and you must cite any sources you use.

Assignment Schedule: I will announce assignments in class. The normal schedule will require you to **make a contribution** by Friday at 11:59 PM, and to **respond to two other peers' contrubutions** by the following Tuesday at 11:59 PM. The first PackBack assignment, to introduce yourself, will be due on Friday, 17 Jan, and will not require that you respond to anyone.

Ground Rules: You are expected to engage with your peers and the material respectfully. Your posts will be moderated (removed) if they don't meet Community Guidelines. If your post is removed, you will receive an email prompting you to edit and re-submit for credit. However, it can take up to 24 hours for the email to be sent, so there is no guarantee that you will be able to re-submit in time.

Technical Problems: If you have any questions or concerns at any time during the semester regarding Packback registration or use, please contact the customer support team at help@packback.co.