**Philosophy Department**

**Basic Course Information and Policies**

It is impossible to write guidelines that will cover everything that may come up. A general rule of thumb is, “when in doubt, ask!” It is the department’s desire to be helpful to and supportive of all faculty. All of us share the goal of doing a good job teaching students philosophy.

# General

1. A syllabus should be distributed to students on the first day of class. The syllabus is a “contract” between the instructor and students that works to protect both the instructor and student in case of controversy. The syllabus must include a clear and accurate account of course expectations and requirements: It should include specific grading and assessment procedures, policies for late work, policies for plagiarism, conduct policies (as for ringing phones), policies for missed exams and extra credit, and be clear about attendance requirements (if any). It is good if you can say something about the value of philosophy that will give context to your course – and give students a direction if they are interested in more.

Sample syllabi are available in the department office. Perhaps none is ideal, but the samples should be a source of ideas, and exhibit possible differences and commonalities. Please submit a copy of your syllabi to the department office no later than the first day of class*.*

1. The department maintains a [Logic Lab](https://www.csusb.edu/philosophy/student-resources/logic-lab) [i](http://philosophy.csusb.edu/logicLab.html)n UH 047; in it there are 16 computer stations and a “tutoring” area. The Lab is staffed by philosophy majors. It is a place for tutoring in logic and philosophy and just to hang out. You are encouraged to find (maybe creative) ways to use the Lab. Within limits, if there is some specialized software that you would like to see on the computers, we can try to obtain it. Creative uses of the lab are welcome!

1. Ordinarily lecturers have an office with a computer. Each faculty member has their own CSUSB email and phone. You should use your CSUSB email and CSUSB computing software resources (like Canvas) for conducting University business. While office computers have a wired web connection, the campus also supports a wireless eduroam system (which connects at many other academic institutions too). The University supports the Canvas system. There are also possibilities for University-hosted websites; Ken Han can help you with that.
2. If for any reason you cannot make it to class, the department office (537-5869 or Lisa (demarco@csusb.edu)), should be notified. In addition, faculty are responsible to notify students of class cancellations. This is easy to do through MyCoyote.

1. Adds and drops: Students register by a priority system through their MyCoyote portal. Given space, they may add this way through the first week. Also, given space, students who are waitlisted and meet registration criteria are added automatically during this first week. If a waitlisted student is not added automatically, it is because the system thinks they do not meet some requirement (prerequisite, unit limit, class conflict or the like). When classes are full, and after the first week, adds require faculty and chair approval. We want to keep to the enrollment caps (26) except in exceptional circumstances.

In general, students admitted over a cap should have some special documented “story”: graduating senior, philosophy major, or the like – with priority to ones who have been attending.

1. Administrative drops are possible when, without special arrangement, students miss two consecutive classes in the first three weeks, or do not meet prerequisites. You are never required to do this but you may if you wish (see the[Bulletin](https://catalog.csusb.edu/) and search for ‘administrative drop’). If you plan to drop students, be sure your policy is in your syllabus. If you will be dropping students, send a message with the course, student names and numbers to Lisa; she will do the drops. You are responsible to notify the students that they have been dropped.

1. Students should not ordinarily have class cancelled, dismissed early, etc. The standard expectation is 150 minutes of class time/week for a 3-unit semester course. You will find different calendars, including for final exams at [Academic Scheduling](https://www.csusb.edu/academic-scheduling).

1. Office Hours: You should plan to hold one office hour per week per class. Hosting some Zoom office hours is fine. Office hours should be posted on your office door.
2. It is essential that student evaluations (SOTEs) be administered properly and at the designated times. You should be out of the room when evaluations are being administered and you should not “prime” students in any way; both of these policies are in place for your protection.

1. Grades should be turned in by the designated time. While individual classes will vary, watch for “grade inflation;” do this in spite of the external pressure to inflate our grades.

The campus has policies for discipline problems, plagiarism, and the like. A number of policies are located at [Student Conduct](https://www.csusb.edu/student-conduct).

1. If you have a student in distress, contact the CARE team at [care@csusb.edu](mailto:care@csusb.edu) They will be able to route your student to resources to help them in the ways they need help.
2. At the start of the semester and as appropriate, faculty are encouraged to direct students to the Department website, and particularly to the [advising for philosophy page](https://www.csusb.edu/philosophy/student-resources/advising-philosophy)[.](http://philosophy.csusb.edu/studentResources/advisingChecklist.html) To the extent that we can assist students navigate life and the university, it is a good thing!

# Content

In general, the goal is to offer rigorous and serious philosophy courses. Except for courses in formal logic, most every philosophy course should include a writing component with significant feedback and culminating in student rewrites. This is mandatory for writing intensive (WI) classes, which are the majority of our classes. Though individual courses have their own goals and expectations, course design is up to the instructor. In case of questions or controversy, feel free to consult with the chair. There is always the potential to feel tension between rigor and student reviews (particularly for untenured faculty). Within reasonable limits, treat **rigor as essential**, and work toward improved reviews. It is the department’s aim to be supportive of all faculty in this endeavor.

**Phil 1011-1015 (intro to philosophy) and Phil 3006-3040 (upper division GE)***:* The goal of these courses is to engage students with philosophical thinking, reading, and writing. Such a course may be arranged in many different ways (topically, historically, or whatever). However, no such course is a mere survey of ideas. Rather, it explores philosophical *issues* and *arguments,* encouraging students to work toward their resolution. Any intro or UD GE course should,

1. Present **original** philosophical writing, rather than relying exclusively on secondary materials.

1. Give students ample opportunity to **discuss** philosophical ideas, rather than being conducted in a pure lecture format. Here, PowerPoint can significantly hinder discussion and interaction if it is not managed properly.

1. Include writing with at least some homework and rewriting, so that students can practice their philosophical argumentation in a context which includes some of the **“Socratic” give-and-take** which is essential to philosophy.

1. Evaluate students’ ability to interact philosophically with respect to issues and arguments. Thus, e.g., exams, if any, should not be exclusively multiple choice or true-false.

**Phil 1005 (Critical Thinking)***:* Phil 1005 may take up methods of many different sorts. It is informal, at least in the sense that it does not develop a full formal system (this is the place for Phil 2100 and 3100). In one way or another, any Phil 1005 introduces at least the notion of validity and has students apply it in concrete cases.

Though relatively “short-answer” homework may be a major part of course requirements, any Phil 1005 should have as a component at least some written product which applies notions from the course to some concrete case.

**Any questions? Feel free to contact the chair, Matt Davidson, at mdavidson@csusb.edu**