

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.

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 student learning outcomes, 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. A number of syllabus and course policies are collected at the [Teaching Resource Center](#).

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.*

2. The department maintains a [Logic Lab](#) in UH 047; 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!

3. Ordinarily lecturers have a (maybe shared) office with a somewhat functional computer. Each faculty member has their own CSUSB e-mail and phone. 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 Blackboard system. There are also possibilities for University hosted websites.

4. Each semester you receive a copy card which may be used in machines on the first three floors of UH. It is also possible to make copies or print from the machine in the back of the department office. For larger duplicating requests (syllabi and the like), you

can submit to [Printing Services](#) (you will need numbers from Rachel). Such requests need to be submitted a full week ahead of time.

5. If for any reason you cannot make it to class, the department office (537-5869), should be notified. In addition, faculty are responsible to notify students of class cancellations. This is easy to do through MyCoyote. Special issues (trip to a conference, or whatever) should be taken up ahead of time with the chair.

6. Adds and drops have increasingly become an issue as lower-division philosophy has become a scarce resource. 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 signature; when classes are full and after the second week, the chair signs as well; there are no adds after the third week. We want to keep to the enrollment caps except in exceptional circumstances.

You should think of any add slip you sign as admitting a student over the cap. The chair cannot consider an add slip until after it is signed by an instructor – so don't send students to the office with an unsigned slip! Once slips are signed by the chair, they will be returned to students only after the first week, so that students permitted by signature do not jump the waitlist (by keeping a class full and so denying slots to waitlisted students). So, during the first week the waitlist will add up to cap and signatures will be submitted on top. 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. In general, the chair will go along with faculty decisions; you will get pushback (for your own protection) only if you are going crazy, running well over cap as an average of your sections.

The (yellow cardstock) *overload* form permits *both* an overload and the add to your course. So again, students with a signed form will be added after the first week and on top of cap.¹

7. 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 (in the [Bulletin](#) search for 'administrative drop'). If youquara will drop students, *be sure your policy is in your syllabus*. If you will be

¹ The waitlist engine runs once each evening. A course is "full" so long as there are students in the waitlist. There may therefore be discrepancies between the way a course looks on academic scheduling and the way the system is thinking of it. Also, students who do not meet requirements will get "stuck" on the list – with other students "flowing" past them.

dropping students, send a message with the course, student names and numbers to Rachel; she will do the drops. You are responsible to notify the students that they have been dropped.

8. 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. As per university policy, a final exam cannot be given prior to the official exam period, and the official period must be used whether or not you actually give a final examination (it is sufficient merely to receive a take-home exam or the like in that period). You will find different calendars, including for final exams at [Academic Scheduling](#).

9. Office hours: The University's standard expectation on the quarter system is one hour per week for each 4-unit course you are teaching - plus availability by appointment. One assumes that the Faculty Senate will adopt a similar policy for semesters. Typically, hours are in your office. But you might hold some hours in the Logic Lab; some, with agreement from Rachel, have preferred the back room of the Department office; or you might go outside – or any place where you will be accessible to students. Please submit a schedule of your office hours, with a specification where you will be, to the department office at least one week before the first day of class. *Please post your office hours on your office door using the official form* (this is important to students, and a concern of the Dean).

10. 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.

11. Similarly, grades must be turned in by the designated time. Except in cases of extreme emergency, penalties for missing deadlines are dire. While individual classes will vary, watch for “grade inflation.”

12. The campus has policies for discipline problems, plagiarism, and the like. A number of policies (including an “Academic Dishonesty Form”) are located at [Student Conduct](#). If you encounter problems of this sort, please consult with the chair.

13. At the start of the semester and as appropriate, faculty are encouraged to direct students to the Department website, and particularly to [student resources](#) along with the linked [advising page](#). To the extent that we can assist students navigate life and the university, it is a good thing!

Generally the webpage is a useful center for information – including many of the links in this document at [faculty resources](#).

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. Though individual courses have their own goals and expectations, course design is up to the instructor. In case of questions or controversy, 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 1010: The goal of Phil 1010 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 Phil 1010 is a mere survey of ideas. Rather, it explores philosophical *issues* and *arguments*, pushing students to work toward their resolution. Any Phil 1010 should,

- a. Present **original** philosophical writing, rather than relying exclusively on secondary materials.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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: 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

3000). 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 (maybe just a 2-3 page paper) which applies notions from the course to some concrete case.

Any questions? Feel free to contact Pete Robertshaw, chair at 537-7661, [or proberts@csusb.edu](mailto:proberts@csusb.edu).