

Philosophy in the Americas

PHIL 35 – Winter 2023

Mondays Wednesdays Fridays, 1:00pm-1:50pm

Ridgewalk Academic Complex (RWAC) 0426 (4th floor)

INSTRUCTORS

Professor: Clinton Tolley
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Office: [zoom]
<https://ucsd.zoom.us/my/clinton.tolley>
Hours: Weds 10:30-12:00pm
(sign-up on Canvas)

Teaching Assistant: Juan Carlos Gonzalez
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Office: [in person]
RWAC 0435
Hours: Mon 11:45am-12:45pm
(sign-up on Canvas)

CANVAS SITE

<https://canvas.ucsd.edu/courses/43748>

READINGS

all readings will be made available electronically as pdfs on our Canvas site

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our course will provide a survey of some of the highlights in the history of philosophy that emerges in the Americas, with a special focus on the history of philosophy in North America and especially in the United States.

We will begin by reading selections expressing the philosophical understanding of the world, humanity, and the divine, that was already formulated by the peoples living on the continents prior to the ‘discovery’ of the Americas after Columbus at the end of the 1400s. We will then explore some of the philosophical visions of these same topics that emerged in North America during the initial ‘colonial’ period in ‘New Spain’ and ‘New England’, looking at attempts to European and ‘Indian’ religious-intellectual traditions. From here we will follow out intellectual developments in the early U.S., focusing in particular on questions of social and political identity in relation to the various kinds of inhabitants of the continent, including ‘native Americans’ as well as those forcibly removed from Africa and transported to the continent as slaves. Our focus after the Civil War and Emancipation will continue to be on the ongoing philosophical articulation of what it means to ‘American’, in light of the wide range of diversity (‘pluralism’) of the inhabitants, along race and ethnicity, gender, class, and political philosophies. We will follow out this question through the period of the World Wars, on into the Civil Rights movements of the mid-century. We will conclude with some more recent assessments of the problems and prospects of the philosophy of ‘being American’.

One goal of the course will be to introduce and critically engage with a wide variety of questions about how best to incorporate geology (natural ‘history’) and history as the activity of humans into philosophy itself, both into ethics, politics, and the philosophy of culture, but also into philosophical anthropology, i.e., discussions of the nature of being human itself, in particular what philosophical import should be found in the ongoing ‘facts’ arising from the Americas. Another will be to explore the wide variety of philosophical traditions and approaches that have actively taken up these questions over the centuries of human habitation of these continents. A third will be to begin to formulate (by the conclusion of the course) an assessment of the problems and prospects for future work in the ‘philosophy in the Americas’, the philosophy of being ‘American’, and our understanding of ‘American philosophy’.

Note: PHIL 35 may be used to fulfill the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirement, as well as the Humanities requirement for Muir College.

REQUIREMENTS

1. *Weekly questionnaires* (30%)

Early each week (usually end of Monday), there will be a questionnaire posted (as pdf) on the course's Canvas page, to be submitted electronically on Canvas by **the end of Friday (midnight)** of the same week (under 'Quizzes'). The form of these questions will be multiple-choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank. The topics of the questions will be drawn from the assigned readings and the lectures from the current week, and answering them will be a straightforward affair for anyone who attends lectures and completes all the readings.

* *Extra credit:* During finals week there will be an optional extra-credit questionnaire, due Friday of exam week, 5pm.

2. *Weekly online discussion posts* (20%) & *comments* (10%)

(A) **By end of Thurs (midnight)** of each week, you will need to contribute a post to your group (divided up by last name) on our course's online discussion forum on Canvas. Your post should include:

- (1) a quote of one sentence (or two) of particular interest to you from the week's readings,
- (2) 100-word (minimum) response, including your thoughts and opinions about the subject-matter being discussed, and
- (3) at least one question about the sentence(s) you've chosen.

(B) Before the **end of Friday (midnight)**, you will also need to post one 50-word (minimum) comment on someone else's post in your discussion group.

* *Extra credit:* Each week you can earn another 0.25% toward your grade by responding to a second post or comment made by others (50-word minimum; once per week; up to an additional 2.5% toward the overall course grade).

3. *Mid-term exam* (15%)

A take-home exam due at **noon on Monday of 6th week (Feb 13th)**; questions will be distributed Monday of 5th week, and there will be an exam-focused review/discussion session with the TA during 5th week.

4. *Final exam* (20%)

A timed 'in-class' exam which will be held during the specified window of time for our final: **Friday mid-day (11:30am-2:30pm) of exam week (March 24th)**; a study guide will be distributed during 10th week, and there will be an exam-focused review/discussion session with the TA during the end of 10th week.

5. *Two office hours 5 minute virtual 'check-ins'* (2.5% x 2 = 5%)

Each student is required to have **two virtual meetings** (via zoom) with the instructors (professor and/or TA) during the term, **once during the first half** (weeks 1-5), a **second during the second half** (weeks 6-10). The canonical scheduling time for these check-ins will be during the weekly office hours; if neither the professor or TA office hour slot ever works with your schedule, be in touch as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements. Meeting duration will be 5 minutes.

****NOTE: participating in at least one of the one-on-one meetings is required in order to pass the class.****

NOTES ABOUT REQUIREMENTS

A. No extensions will be granted for any assignment or exam, except in cases of *genuine* emergency (e.g., earthquake, flood, fire, death in the family, illness certified by a doctor). No extensions can be granted for the weekly questionnaires *at all*, due to the distribution of the correct answers shortly after the due date.

B. The UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship must be observed in this course. This includes observance of the following six principles:

As a student,

1. I will not receive or provide unauthorized assistance in examinations.
2. I will not use unauthorized materials during an examination.
3. I will not use materials from sources without proper quotation, acknowledgement or citations.
4. I will not alter examinations, essays, or other assignments for regrading.
5. I will not fabricate data or references.
6. I will not use false excuses to obtain extensions of time for examinations or writing assignments.

C. *Maintaining academic integrity*: Though students are strongly encouraged to discuss the assignments with one another, each student must submit answers to the assignments independently of one another, written in her or his own words. Additionally, students agree that by taking this course, their mid-term examinations and final papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted exams and papers will be included as source documents in the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) site.

D. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing (i) will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, (ii) will receive a failing grade on the assignment at issue, and (iii) will be in jeopardy of failing the entire course, depending on the nature of the breach of academic integrity.

E. The use of *technology* (phones, tablets, computers, etc.) is to be limited to engagement with course material.

F. If any accommodations are needed due to a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me at the end of the first class period or as soon as possible. Students requesting accommodations for the course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and also to the OSD Liaison in the Philosophy Department (Nancy Guerrero) in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

{*subject to change*: all texts will be available on Canvas; texts are to be read prior to the course meeting on the date listed} *Note:* The quantity of readings per week is relatively low, because the degree of difficulty of many of the readings is relatively high (as is often the case with philosophy). Students are very much encouraged to read all of the texts twice over (e.g., a slow skim before class, slower read-through after class), to aid comprehension.

1.	Mon Jan 9	introduction to philosophy and to the Americas	[no readings]	Weds Jan 11	indigenous philosophies of Central America	Popol Vuh [Mayan]; Codex Chimalpopoca [Nahuatl (Aztec)]	Fri Jan 13	indigenous philosophies of North America	David Cusick, Ancient History of the Six Nations [Iroquois]; Walam Olum [Lenape/Delaware]
2.	Mon Jan 16	[Martin Luther King, Jr. Day]	[no class]	Weds Jan 18	philosophies of colonialism in 'New Spain'	Bartolomé de las Casas, <i>In Defense of the Indians</i> (1551)	Fri Jan 20	philosophies of colonialism in 'New England'	Cadwallader Colden, <i>The History of Five Nations</i> (1747); Benjamin Franklin, 'Remarks concerning the savages of North America' (1784)
3.	Mon Jan 23	Catholic philosophy in the 'new world'	Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz, <i>Loa for Divine Narcissus</i> (c 1688)	Weds Jan 25	Protestant philosophy in the 'new world'	Jonathan Edwards, 'Man's Natural Blindness...' (1740), 'A Humble Inquiry...' (1749)	Fri Jan 27	transcendentalism and the unity of spirit	Ralph Waldo Emerson, '[Harvard] Divinity School Address' (1838)
4.	Mon Jan 30	transcendentalism and feminism	Margaret Fuller, <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century</i> [sel] (1844)	Weds Feb 1	self-formation through education	Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, 'The Importance of Education' (1849)	Fri Feb 3	identity and freedom in law and institutions	Andrés Bello, 'American Politics' (1832), 'Observance of the Laws' (1836), 'Government and Society' (1843)
5.	Mon Feb 6	philosophy of freedom on the eve of the Civil war	Lydia Maria Child, 'Woman's Rights', 'The Indians' (1843); 'Duty of Disobedience' (1860)	Weds Feb 8	early African American philosophy	Frederick Douglass, 'The Nature of Slavery', 'The Inhumanity of Slavery' (1850); 'What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?' (1852)	Fri Feb 10	[review session]	[no readings]

6.	Mon Feb 13*	emerging self-consciousness of the continents	José Martí, 'Our America' (1891)	Weds Feb 15	pluralism and pragmatism	William James, 'Pragmatism and Humanism' (1907)	Fri Feb 17	anarchism and individualism as freedom	Emma Goldman, 'Preface', 'Anarchism' (1910)
		* mid-term exam due 1pm							
7.	Mon Feb 20	[Presidents' Day]	[no class]	Weds Feb 22	social philosophy and 'home economics'	Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'Introductory', 'Domestic Ethics', 'Home and Social Progress', <i>The Home</i> (1903)	Fri Feb 24	social philosophy, race, and socialism	W.E.B. Du Bois, 'Of our Spiritual Strivings' (1904); 'The Evolution of the Race Problem' (1909), 'Socialism and the Negro Problem' (1913)
8.	Mon Feb 27	philosophy of the city: the unity of neighborhoods	Jane Addams, 'Introduction', <i>Newer Ideals of Peace</i> (1907)	Weds Mar 1	trans-national politics and cosmic (racial) unity	José Vasconcelos, 'The Race Problem in Latin America' (1926), 'Mestizaje (III)' (1925)	Fri Mar 3	cultural difference and the question of 'civilization'	Luther Standing Bear, 'What the Indian Means to America' (1933)
9.	Mon Mar 6	revisiting the question of an 'American' philosophy	Augusto Salazar Bondy, 'The Meaning and Problem of Hispanic American Thought' (1968)	Weds Mar 8	philosophy of the state: resisting totalitarianism	Hannah Arendt, 'Preface', 'Anti-semitism as an outrage to common sense', 'The perplexities of the rights of man', <i>Origins of Totalitarianism</i> (1951)	Fri Mar 10	phenomenology of structural oppression	James Baldwin, 'Many Thousands Gone', 'Stranger in a Village', <i>Notes of a Native Son</i> (1955)
10.	Mon Mar 13	subjectivity and the plurality of identities	María Lugones, 'Playfulness, 'world-traveling', and loving perception' (1987)	Weds Mar 15	the 'American' promise and 'prophetic' pragmatism	Cornel West, 'The New Cultural Politics of Difference' (1990)	Fri Mar 17	[review session]	[no readings]
11.							* Fri Mar 24	final exam submission window 11:30am-2:30pm	extra credit due 5pm