

# Course Information

“Like all great stories, the best science fiction, at its heart, is about people. We identify the genre based on its exploration of current and future technologies, systems, and situations, but what those technologies, systems, and situations really do is show us to ourselves. When we look at ourselves in unfamiliar situations, interacting with unfamiliar environments, like in science fiction, we gain a new understanding of ourselves. And that’s amazing.” – Andrea Kovarcsik

## Description

“For philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas.” – Bertrand Russell

Everyone is a philosopher. As Russell said, philosophy is a discipline of questions, and many of the most important questions in the history of philosophy are some of the same questions you have probably asked yourself. Where do we come from? What is the nature of the universe? Can I really know anything about it? What is knowledge? Who am I? How should I live? In this course, we will encounter various answers to these questions and look at the philosophers who have historically made these arguments.

But why science fiction? As you will see, science fiction is particularly well suited to philosophical inquiry. The use of thought experiments aids much philosophical inquiry, and the practice of considering interesting possibilities that aren’t yet a scientific reality has a long and distinguished tradition in philosophy.

The course will impart some knowledge of philosophy’s history and methods, but the real point is to get you asking important questions, reasoning clearly and capably, and sharpening your critical thinking skills—developing abilities that will make a difference in your life long after specific content details have faded from memory.

## Contact Information, etc.

**Professor** Mara Harrell

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**Student Walk-in Hours**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00-11:00

**Teaching Assistant** Bosco Garcia

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Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:15-3:15

**Course communication:** All course announcements will be posted on Canvas. If you need to contact one of us, you must use your UCSD email address and include ‘PHIL 16’ in the subject line. Replies can be expected within 24-48 hours. Please note that grade disputes will only be discussed and resolved in person (or via Zoom), not via email.

## Student Walk-in Hours

If you cannot make the scheduled walk-in hours, please contact me to make an appointment. You are also welcome to stop in whenever I am in my office with the door open.

I encourage you to use the student walk-in hours to clarify points you don’t understand, get additional readings, talk about the subject matter in relation to your interests, go over work in progress, or address problems you may be having in the course.

Visit early and often. Email is the most reliable way to contact me.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between several kinds of philosophical questions
- Describe the role of thought experiments in philosophical inquiry
- Identify and analyze philosophical questions and ideas in a work of science fiction
- Evaluate evidence for and against various philosophical positions using thought experiments

## Texts

All required & recommended readings for this course will be available on the Canvas site. ALWAYS bring the materials assigned for that day's class to that day's class!

### What else do I need for class?

- A copy of the required course text
- A tablet/computer for access to Canvas, email, and websites
- Something to write on and write with during class

## Assignments

This class will have 6 types of assignments: the syllabus quiz, the office visit, reading quizzes, discussion questions, in-class activities, and a final project. Research about learning strongly suggests<sup>1</sup> that the most crucial factor in learning is **doing the work** of reading, writing, recalling, practicing, synthesizing, and analyzing. The assignments are designed to help with that. The specific requirements for each assignment will be given separately. There will be 10 reading quizzes, 10 discussion questions, and 17 in-class activities over the quarter.

## Grading

The assignments in this course will not be graded traditionally. Instead, they will be graded on a "satisfactory/unsatisfactory" basis. This system is called "**specifications grading**." An assignment is "satisfactory" if it has met all the specifications for that assignment. The specifications for each assignment will be described in more detail in the Assignments folder on the Canvas site for this course.

Your final grade in this course will be determined by how many assignments you have completed satisfactorily (see below). This means that you can choose what grade you would like to earn in this course and aim toward that grade, as it will depend on the successful completion of various assignments. Rubrics will be available so you can see how each assignment is graded.

### What counts as "satisfactory" for each assignment?

*Syllabus Quiz:* Answering at least 90% of the questions correctly earns a grade of "satisfactory" for that quiz. The quiz will be set up in Canvas such that you automatically get 3 tries to get at least 90%.

*Reading Quizzes:* Answering at least 90% of the questions correctly on a quiz earns a grade of "satisfactory" for that quiz. In Canvas, the quizzes will be set up such that you automatically get 3 tries to get at least 90%.

*Discussion Questions:* The assignment instructions will include a list of specifications the assignment must meet. A grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* the specifications.

*In-class Activities:* These are small-group or individual activities and/or writing that you'll complete during class time for us to discuss during class. I will assess them as either "satisfactory" (you did them and, if relevant, turned them in) or "unsatisfactory" (you weren't in class, you didn't do them, or you did them very weakly). This means that we will be taking attendance.

*Final Project:* The assignment instructions will give a list of several specifications that the assignment must meet. Earning a grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* the specifications.

### What happens if what I turn in doesn't earn a grade of "satisfactory"?

The point of having a grading system like this is to make the student's final grade in the course indicate the mastery level of the material the student achieved. In traditional points-based grading, a student can consistently produce sub-standard work and still pass the class, in which case the passing grade does not reflect the fact that the student may not have mastered *any* of the material.

So, what to do? The answer is to give the students ways not only to master the content but also to demonstrate that mastery. So, for any assignment deemed unsatisfactory, the student can **revise and resubmit** it within 48 hours of the notification of the grade. On the other hand, the student should have incentives to turn in their best work on the first try. Thus, the opportunities the student has to revise and resubmit are limited to Reading Quizzes, Discussion Questions, and the Final Project, and only if the original submission is submitted on time.

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<sup>1</sup> There are many good books that summarize research on how people learn. These include *Make it Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel; *Small Teaching* by James Lang; and *Understanding How We Learn* by Yana Weinstein, Megan Sumaracki, and Oliver Caviglioli.

**How do I revise and resubmit an assignment?**

Revising and resubmitting an assignment requires (1) revising the assignment based on the feedback given and (2) a reflection (a short description of how you used the formative feedback you received to improve your revision).

**Will late assignments be accepted?**

For the Reading Quizzes, Discussion Questions, and the Final Project, there is a 48-hour grace period to submit the assignment. This means that, for any of these assignments, you can submit up to 2 days after the stated deadline and still have the assignment graded. However, the only assignments a student can revise and resubmit (in the case of earning an “unsatisfactory” grade) are those that the student has submitted **BEFORE** the stated deadline. This means that if you submit your assignment during the grace period, you will **NOT** be able to revise and resubmit if the assignment earns an “unsatisfactory.” Any assignments submitted after the grace period are also automatically “unsatisfactory.”

**So, what do I have to do to get an A (or B or C) in this class?**

Each assignment has its own set of adequacy criteria included in the description. The earned grade of “satisfactory” is required for each final letter grade:

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
1. <i>Insultingly Easy Syllabus Quiz</i>	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
2. <i>Reading Quizzes</i>	9/10	8/10	7/10	6/10
3. <i>Discussion Questions</i>	9/10	8/10	7/10	6/10
4. <i>In-class Activities</i>	14/17	12/17	10/17	8/17
5. <i>Final project</i>	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1

For a course grade of “F,” just do less than what’s required for a “D.”

**Can I only get A, B, C, D, or F? No plusses or minuses?**

You can earn a + or - attached to your base grade in the following situations:

You will receive a ‘+’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on at least one of #2, #3, or #4, with the percentage corresponding to a higher grade. You will receive a ‘-’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on one of #2, #3, or #4 with the percentage corresponding to a lower grade.

- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz, the office visit, the final project, 9 out of 10 reading quizzes, 9 out of 10 discussion questions, and 14 out of 17 in-class assignments ⇒ **Earn an A**
- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz, the office visit, the final project, 7 out of 10 reading quizzes, 7 out of 10 discussion questions, and 12 out of 17 in-class assignments ⇒ **Earn a C+**
- Example: Earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the syllabus quiz, the office visit, the final project, 8 out of 10 reading quizzes, 8 out of 10 discussion questions, and 10 out of 17 in-class assignments ⇒ **Earn a B-**

*Note: Both an A and an A+ are 4.0 in your GPA calculation. However, if you exceed all the requirements to earn an “A” in the class, your course grade will be “A+.”*

**How can I keep track of my grade in this course?**

Find the grade above for which you met all the requirements. That will be your course grade! You can track your progress by determining the percentage of the reading quizzes, the discussion questions, and the in-class activities you have completed.

**IMPORTANT!** Please note that although Canvas will display the grades you have earned on each assignment, the score in the “Total” column in the grade book has no meaning and does **NOT** correspond to your grade in the class.

**Attendance**

Attendance is somewhat required—you need to be in class to earn a grade of “satisfactory” on the in-class activities, which means that to earn an “A,” you can only miss 3 class periods over the quarter. Besides being able to do the in-class exercises, there are many reasons to come to class. First, the reading is either science fiction stories or philosophical articles. Only in class will we make the connections between the philosophy and the science fiction. Additionally, you can’t have your questions answered while reading the text or watching a video. In class, you can have your questions answered in real-time, and I can offer several alternative explanations if one isn’t sufficient. Finally, both the verbal and non-verbal feedback I get from students in class help me determine whether I am going too fast, or if students are confused.

## FAQ

### What should I call you?

Please refer to me as either Professor Harrell or Dr. Harrell.

### How much time will I need to devote to this course?

Phil 16 is a 4-unit course, and it will meet for approximately 3 instructional hours per week for 10 weeks. The general guideline for such a course is that you spend 3 hours on course-related work outside of class for every 1 hour you spend in class. That's an expected average, not a requirement. However, the course materials (and assignments) might require more time than you expect, so "budgeting" about 9 hours per week for this course should give you plenty of time.

### What should I do during our class meetings?

1. You should arrive at class sessions on time, stay for the required components of each class session, and constructively participate in all class activities.
2. During the class meetings, you should be focused on class, doing your best to avoid doing or interacting with things that will distract you, your classmates, or me.
3. DO NOT make any audio or visual recordings of any part of the class session unless you and I have specifically discussed doing so as one of your documented accommodations for ADA purposes. Doing otherwise undermines the ability to maintain your classmates' trust, violates your classmates' legitimate privacy expectations, and could lead to their feeling (or even being) unsafe. Unless your classmates and I have explicitly said otherwise, you DO NOT have permission to take a photo or screen capture, live stream a small-group discussion, or record any part of a class meeting.
4. You should treat everyone in the class with at least as much patience, respect, kindness, and consideration as you expect from the rest of us.

The listed items above apply to all our class meetings, whether in-person or online. These are not the only expectations, but they are some of the most important ones for helping to foster and maintain a culture of respect and engagement.

### What will we usually do in class?

On an average class day, you will come to class having already read/watched/heard the assigned materials for that day's class. We'll spend time focusing on questions and activities designed to help you understand that material more accurately and deeply and generate new answers and questions. After class, you will be reading/watching for the next class meeting, talking with your classmates, talking with me, and working on your course assignments.

This class will encourage and require active participation from all students. Various well-designed studies – plus our own life experiences – show that most of us promptly forget most of what we read or hear unless we can apply the material very soon after we read or hear it. (Our brains are efficient: why would they remember something they can't use?) Our class activities and assignments are designed to help you use the ideas you encounter.

## Late Assignments and Requests for Extensions

Assignments submitted after the 48-hour grace period will be marked "unsatisfactory" unless a request for an additional extension is made before the deadline. Requests for extensions must be accompanied by relevant documentation and will be denied after the deadline.

## Cell Phones, Laptops, and Other Related Technologies

How students interact with portable technology devices can harm classroom dynamics. Studies have shown that not only students who use these devices suffer but also the students around them. Therefore, I expect you to **turn off your cell phone** before class. There is to be no text messaging, checking email, or otherwise "playing" with electronics during class.

## Religious Observance

If you have a conflict between a religious holiday and a graded assignment, please get in touch with one of us in advance so we can make appropriate arrangements.

## Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students must present their AFA letters to the Faculty (please arrange to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

## Health and Well-being

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this quarter by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Many helpful resources are available on campus, and an essential part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, complex life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me so I can support you. UC San Diego provides several resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counseling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755 | caps.ucsd.edu)

Student Health Services (858-534-3300 | studenthealth.ucsd.edu)

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793 | care.ucsd.edu)

The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632 | basicneeds.ucsd.edu)

## Academic Integrity

The integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and, in so doing, protect the validity of intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>

Representing other people's ideas as though they were your own is plagiarism and a violation of academic integrity. I have a zero-tolerance policy about plagiarism. Plagiarism is not restricted to verbatim copying of other people's words. You should cite anything that (a) you got from someone else and (b) a reasonable person would not know beforehand. You should cite any ideas and quotes from other people for proper citation. (Your choice about citation format, but please be consistent.)

I realize that the vast majority of you will never consider cheating. However, a few of you may (for a variety of reasons) be tempted to plagiarize others' work. **Do not take chances with plagiarism:** if you are uncertain whether you are doing something unacceptable, please just ask. I am happy to answer questions about whether something constitutes plagiarism. And if you are ever tempted to present someone else's ideas as your own, please talk to one of us so that we can address the underlying challenges pushing you to that point.

## Academic Integrity Policy: Use of AI Tools in Coursework

Academic integrity is fundamental to ensuring a fair and enriching learning environment for all students in this course. You are expected to produce original work that reflects your own understanding, critical thinking, and analysis of course material. This policy outlines how AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can and cannot be used in this course, ensuring that their use aligns with the values of academic honesty and intellectual growth.

### General Principles:

1. **Originality of Work:** All submitted work must be your own. While peer collaboration is encouraged in certain activities, assignments requiring individual submission should reflect your ideas, research, and critical thinking. Using AI tools in a way that replaces or undermines your intellectual contribution violates this principle.
2. **Transparency:** If you use AI tools like ChatGPT to generate ideas and clarify concepts or as part of your research process, you must disclose this in your assignment. Transparency about the use of these tools helps maintain academic integrity.

### Permissible Use of AI Tools:

You may use AI tools like ChatGPT in the following ways, provided you adhere to the guidelines below:

- **Idea Generation and Clarification:** You may use AI tools to help brainstorm ideas, clarify complex concepts, or explore potential approaches to your assignments. However, you must critically analyze and refine these ideas. The final product should represent your thoughts and argumentation.
- **Proofreading and Language Assistance:** You may use AI tools to assist with grammar, syntax, and writing mechanics as long as the content of the work remains your own. However, you are responsible for ensuring that the meaning and arguments remain accurate and reflect your intentions.
- **Technical or Factual Inquiries:** You may use AI to look up factual information, such as definitions or explanations of technical concepts. You are responsible for verifying the accuracy of any information provided by AI and citing your sources appropriately if used in your assignments.

**Prohibited Use of AI Tools:**

The following uses of AI tools are considered violations of academic integrity and are strictly prohibited:

- **Generating Complete Assignments:** You may not use AI tools to generate entire essays, reports, or other assignments. This includes any submission where AI-generated text forms most of the content, even if you edited or modified it.
- **Copying AI-Generated Content without Attribution:** Submitting AI-generated content as your own without acknowledging that you used an AI tool is considered plagiarism. Any content generated by AI tools you incorporate into your work must be cited as a source, just like any other reference material.
- **Automating Responses for Class Participation:** If class participation (e.g., discussion boards and in-class activities) is part of your grade, you are expected to contribute based on your ideas and knowledge. Using AI to generate responses for these activities is not permitted.

**Guidelines for Citing AI Tools:**

If you use an AI tool in your research or writing process, you must include a brief note in your bibliography or the body of your text, such as:

- “I used ChatGPT for idea generation for this assignment, but the final analysis and writing are my own.”
- “I used ChatGPT to clarify concepts related to autonomous weapons, though all arguments and conclusions are original to me.”

**Encouraging Ethical Use of AI:**

This course encourages the responsible and ethical use of AI tools. These tools can help expand understanding and facilitate learning, but they should be used as supplements to, not replacements for, your own intellectual work. Always approach AI tools critically, and remember that this course aims to develop your ability to engage with technology and human values from a position of informed analysis.

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**Additional Best Practices:**

- **Engage Critically:** If you use AI tools, treat the content they produce critically, recognizing that these tools can generate both accurate and inaccurate information. Always verify facts and consider the ethical implications of the tool’s use.
- **Seek Guidance:** Before submitting your work, ask me for guidance if you’re unsure whether your use of AI meets the course’s academic integrity standards.

# Course Schedule

All readings are available in the Canvas site for this course. An \* marks optional readings/viewings.

Week		Topic	Read (watch) Before Class	Assignment Due
1	T 1/7	What is Philosophy?		
1	Th 1/9	Thought Experiments & Philosophy	Bradbury, "Dancing So as Not to Be Dead" Title: Introduction to <i>What If...</i> Daly: "Thought Experiment"	Reading Quiz 1 Discussion Questions 1 In-class Activity #1
2	T 1/14	What kind of society is best?	Miller: Political Philosophy, Ch1	Insultingly Easy Syllabus Quiz Reading Quiz 2 In-class Activity #2
2	Th 1/16	What kind of society is best?	Dick: "Minority Report" Kowalski: "Minority Report, Molinism, and the Viability of Precrime" * <i>Minority Report</i> (Movie); Williamson: "With Folded Hands"; <i>TNG</i> (Episode 1.8) "Justice"	Reading Quiz 3 Getting to Know You Survey In-class Activity #3
3	T 1/21	What kind of society is best?	Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" * <i>Strange New Worlds</i> (Episode 1.6) "Lift Us Where Suffering Cannot Reach"; Jemison: "The Ones Who Stay and Fight"; Huang: "As the Last I May Know"	Discussion Questions 2 In-class Activity #4
3	Th 1/23	What should I do?	Resnick, "Kyringaga" & "For I Have Touched the Sky"	Discussion Questions 3 In-class Activity #5
4	T 1/28	What should I do?	Godwin, "The Cold Equations" Narveson, "Morality & Marilyn"	Discussion Questions 4 In-class Activity #6
4	Th 1/30	Who am I?	Parfit: "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"	Reading Quiz 4 In-class Activity #7
5	T 2/4	Who am I?	Olson: "Was I Ever a Fetus?" Egan: "Learning to Be Me" * <i>Dark City</i> (Movie)	Discussion Questions 5 In-class Activity #8
5	Th 2/6	Who am I?	Richards: "Be Right Back and Rejecting Tragedy" Star Trek TNG (Episode 6.24) "Second Chances" * <i>Black Mirror</i> (Episode 2.1) "Be Right Back"	Discussion Questions 6 In-class Activity #9
6	T 2/11	What am I?	Descartes: Meditations 1, 2 & 4 Bisson: "They're Made Out of Meat" * <i>Star Trek TNG</i> (Episode 2.9) "Measure of a Man"	Reading Quiz 5 In-class Activity #10

6	Th 2/13	What am I?	Turing: "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" Saberhagen: "Without a Thought" * <i>Ex Machina (Movie)</i> ; <i>Blade Runner (Movie)</i>	Reading Quiz 6 In-class Activity #11
7	T 2/18	What am I?	Watch: PostHuman: An Introduction to Transhumanism Fukuyama: Transhumanism * <i>Killjoys (Episode 3.1)</i> "Boondoggie"; Sawyer: <i>Mindscan</i>	Discussion Questions 7 In-class Activity #12
7	Th 2/20	What can I know?	Re-read Descartes: Meditation 1 Bostrom "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?" Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics" * <i>The Matrix (Movie)</i>	Reading Quiz 7 In-class Activity #13
8	T 2/25	What can I know?	Dick: "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" *Chiang: "Exhalation"; <i>Total Recall (Movie)</i>	Reading Quiz 8 In-class Activity #14
8	Th 2/27	What can I know?	Isaac Asimov: "Reason"	Discussion Questions 8 In-class Activity #15
9	T 3/4	What is time?	Augustine: From <i>Confessions</i> Bisson: "10:07:24" * <i>Predestination (Movie)</i>	Discussion Questions 9 In-class Activity #16
9	Th 3/6	Could we travel through time?	Heinlein: "—All you zombies—" Lewis: "The Paradoxes of Time Travel" * <i>12 Monkeys (Movie)</i> ; <i>Back to the Future (Movie)</i> ; <i>Futurama (Episode 4.1)</i> "Roswell That Ends Well"	Reading Quiz 9 In-class Activity #17
10	T 3/11	Why save humanity?		Discussion Questions 10 Reading Quiz 10 In-class Activity #18
10	Th 3/13	Wrap Up	Watched Episode 1.1 of "The 100"	In-class Activity #19
	M 3/17			Final Project

Shatterday: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86WIp4Q9lw>

They're Made out of Meat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWCgI7a2ohk> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6JFTmQCFHg>

Posthuman: An Introduction to Transhumanism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTMS9y8OVuY>