

**Department of Philosophy**

**Second Year B.A.  
Student Handbook**

**2022–2023**

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*Co-ordinators*

2nd Year B.A. Co-ordinator: Dr Mette Lebech

International Students Co-ordinator: Dr Michael Dunne

Mature Students Advisor: Dr Cyril McDonnell (1st sem.) Amos Edelheit (2nd sem.)

B.Sc. Computational Thinking Subject

Co-ordinator: Dr Keith Begley

**Some Practical Information**

*Notice Boards, Moodle, and Website*

The Department’s notice boards, Moodle, and the website are important methods of communicating with students. Important information (such as tutorial times and lists, changes in the timetable or in lecture times) will be posted there from time to time. Please consult these notice boards, Moodle, and the website regularly.

*Student Emails*

Likewise, please check your university email account regularly, as this is an important means of communication with the university. You will have received your personal student email account at registration.

*Staff-Student Liaison Committee*

Students from each year elect two representatives for this committee, whose purpose is to allow students to provide feedback to the Department about their educational experience. The Department is represented by Dr Keith Begley, Dr Mette Lebech and Dr Cyril McDonnell.

*Registration and Credits*

At the beginning of each semester, students register *online* for the modules they wish to take. Each module comes with a particular number of ECTS credits (ECTS = European Credit Transfer System). You need to make sure to accumulate enough credits to graduate. A normal academic year of full-time study over two semesters is worth 60 credits for undergraduates.

2BA Joint Honours students require 30 ECTS credits from Philosophy. 2BA Major Honours Philosophy Students require 40 ECTS from Philosophy Modules and 20 ETCS from a minor subject. 2BA Minor Students require 20 credits from Philosophy and 40 credits from their major subject.

Year One students of the B.Sc. in Computational Thinking are required to take the module **PH215A Logic** in the first semester and **PH215B Philosophy in the Digital Age** in the second semester. Year Two students of the B.Sc. in Computational Thinking Degree Programme are required take the modules **PH206 Epistemology** and **PH334A Topics in Analytic Philosophy** (for further details of this module, see our Third Year Student Handbook in Philosophy or ‘course finder’).

Lecture times and venues are found on ‘course finder’ and on the departmental notice board. For full information on Learning Outcomes, repeat options, which modules are available for your chosen degree etc. please visit ‘course finder’.

*Tutorials*

You should register for tutorials for those modules that carry tutorials. Please check how you register with the module co-ordinator.

Tutorials commence in the third week of classes.

*Programme Advisory Office*

The Programme Advisory Office has been created to assist undergraduate students, including incoming first-year students, with programme-related decisions both before and after the registration period. If you have questions about your degree pathway (what degree programmes are available, what subjects can be combined, etc.), or if you are wondering how electives work, send them an email (programme.choices@mu.ie), give them a call (01 474 7428), or drop by their office (Rowan House, room 1.17).

**First Semester**

**GC230: Introduction to Greek Philosophy (Compulsory)**

(Dr Kieran McGroarty)

This module provides an introduction to Greek philosophy. After a brief survey of the Pre-Socratics and the major figure of Socrates, we move to themes in Platonic philosophy, particularly through Plato’s most famous dialogue, the Republic. This dialogue is ostensibly concerned with the search for a definition of justice/morality, but soon, with the literary Socrates as our guide, Plato turns this into an examination of the nature of the ideal state. The ideas considered in the early Platonic dialogues are seen to recur in the Republic, and the module demonstrates the essential interconnectedness of the principal themes of Plato’s philosophy. The second part of the module concerns itself with the philosophy of Aristotle. The main work examined is Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, arguably the most important work on ethics written in antiquity. Aristotle is chiefly concerned with identifying the ‘good’ for human beings. But unlike Plato, who sought human fulfilment on a higher metaphysical level, Aristotle investigates the activities of ordinary living at ground level so to speak. He outlines the kinds of behaviour we ought to engage in and identifies some of the requirements for a happy life: health, good fortune, and friendship. The module seeks to elucidate the immediate political and social context of Aristotle’s ideas and to examine the way(s) in which he thought we might achieve happiness.

*Assessment:*

* 40% minor essay (c. 2,000 words)
* 60% final written on campus exam (90 minutes)

Repeat Option: Repeat final exam. Continuous assessment mark carried forward to August session.

**PH202: Moral Philosophy in a Globalised Society (Compulsory for majors)**

(Dr Mette Lebech)

This module introduces a distinction between ethics and morals, which it explores in order to shed light on the moral problems encountered with globalization, in particular immigration, which brings the globalized world home to us. It defines ethics as ‘what we think it is appropriate to do’, and sets out to investigate the various elements of this definition by examining action-theory (what it is to do something), value-theory (what it is to consider something appropriate) and political- or community theory (who ‘we’ are). Authors studied include Thomas Aquinas, Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas and Edith Stein. The aim is to discuss how moral philosophy, defined as concerned with what is right or good, can help us address the problems associated with creating a common world for contemporary, pluralist societies.

*Assessment:*

* 40% continuous (10% tutorial attendance - 30% midterm essay assignment (c. 1,500 words))
* 60% final written on campus exam

Repeat Option: Repeat final essay. Continuous assessment mark carried forward.

PH206: **Epistemology (Elective)**

(Dr Keith Begley)

This module is an introduction to epistemology, the study of knowledge. The module examines a range of historical and contemporary views on knowledge. Above all, we will consider the question ‘What is knowledge?’, and explore various kinds and sources of knowledge, the central notions and distinctions that are commonly used in epistemology and discuss some epistemological issues as they arise in the philosophy of science. We will consider a definition or analysis of knowledge as *justified true belief* and discuss each of its three components. We will also attend to a class of problems with this kind of analysis, known as *Gettier problems*. A number of debates involving prominent competing views and approaches in epistemology will be examined, including: Rationalism and Empiricism, Internalism and Externalism, Foundationalism and Coherentism.

**Assessment:**

Continuous assessment (100%):

* Short weekly quiz on Moodle (10% total). Best 10 out of 12.
* Two 2000 word essays (45% each).

Repeat Option:Students may repeat failed essay assignments. Otherwise, students may repeat one of their two essays (45%). Repeat essays must be on different topics to the original submissions. Marks for other assessments will be carried over.

**PH215A: Introduction to Logic (Elective Stream/Elective)**

(Dr Cyril McDonnell)

This module introduces students to the study of logic. In pursuit of this aim, the module examines both classical and modern logic, covering such topics as: the nature and scope of logic; truth and validity; the classification of terms and propositions; translating everyday language into standard logical form; patterns of immediate inference; the syllogism; hypothetical and disjunctive arguments; the basic methods and procedures of modern symbolic logic; the functions of truth-tables; tautologous, contradictory and contingent propositions. Some attention at the end of the module will be devoted to some informal logical fallacies (e.g., attacking the person, appeal to pity, begging the question, false cause, equivocation, hasty generalisation etc.).

*Assessment*

30% continuous assessment (attendance and logical exercises in class)

70% final written on campus exam (120 min)

Repeat Option: Written exam (120 min.)

Second Semester

**PH204: Medieval Philosophy (Compulsory)**

(Prof. Michael W. Dunne)

This module begins with the thought of Augustine (d. 430) and concentrates on the most prominent representatives of the period up to c. 1350: Bonaventure, Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, Scotus and Ockham. We will also examine the golden age of Oxford thought in the 1330s: Richard FitzRalph, Adam Wodeham and Robert Holcot. Some mention will also be made of Irish thinkers of the Middle Ages.

*Assessment*

40% continuous assessment (10% reaction papers, 30% article or chapter review)

60% final written on campus exam (90 minutes)

Repeat Option: Repeat final written exam. Continuous assessment mark carried forward.

**PH205: Unique Animals? Anthropological Concepts in Philosophy (Compulsory for majors)**

(Dr David O’Brien)

This module will examine some major philosophical responses to the question ‘What does it mean to be human?’ with special focus on the 20th century and some important developments in the 21st first century. We will approach the topic under three different headings, using thinkers as ‘case studies’: 1) humans in the context of life and other animals (Max Scheler and Ernst Cassirer), 2) the impact of society, gender perceptions and racism on human self-understanding (Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, and Achille Mbembe), 3) humans and technology (with focus on the transhumanist movement and some implications of AI). Our focus will be on the questions as to whether there is anything unique about the human way of existing, our relation to other life forms and animals, the role of our ‘biological make-up’, if it still makes sense to have a universalising approach in the face of diversity and on-going discrimination, and the potential for and challenges to human existence through technological development.

*Assessment*

100% final written exam (120 minutes)

Repeat Option: Repeat final written exam (120 minutes).

**PH215B: Philosophies of the Digital Age (Elective Stream/ Elective)**

(Dr Keith Begley)

This module is an introduction to an area of applied philosophy that is becoming ever more important in contemporary philosophy and computer science. This is due to a confluence of factors, including various theoretical advances, which has led to the recent rapid progress of powerful machine learning algorithms. The module will strive to treat of the most up-to-date issues arising in the literature and the popular press, and students will be encouraged to make their own contributions to the discussion in this regard. Among the areas covered will be the philosophy of artificial intelligence (AI), including the ethics of AI and data science, and digital ethics more broadly. In particular, the following prominent topics and notions will be considered: The nature of algorithms and machines, Explainability, Interpretability, and Transparency, Trust, Control, Alignment, Feedback (‘human-in-the-loop’), Bias and Fairness, Moral programming, Human-centric AI, Consciousness and ‘Strong AI’, Virtual Reality and the ‘Metaverse’, Computational Creativity, AI and Science. Further, we will discuss the relation between humans and machines, including their interactions and combinations, issues of rights, current legal frameworks, political developments, and the impact of emerging technologies on society. It will also be important for us to keep in mind and consider the role of philosophy itself, and in what ways it can best be applied in the digital age.

*Assessment*

Continuous assessment (100%):

* Short weekly quiz on Moodle (10% total). Best 10 out of 12.
* Two 2000 word essays (45% each).

Supplementals:Students may repeat failed essay assignments. Otherwise, students may repeat one of their two essays (45%). Repeat essays must be on different topics to the original submissions. Marks for other assessments will be carried over.

Repeat Option: Two essays (c. 2,000 words each), 50% each.

**PH216: Studying Women Philosophers (Elective)**

(Dr Mette Lebech)

This module will examine the thought of some women philosophers from classical times to today, for example Diotima of Mantinea (c. 450 BC), Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), Heloise (1100?-1164), Anna Maria van Shurman (1607-1678), Elisabeth of Bohemia (1617-1680), Anne Conway (1631-1679), Damaris Cudworth Mashham (1658-1708), Émilie du Châtelet (1706-1749), Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858), Jane Addams (1860-1935), Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), and Elisabeth Anscombe (1919-2001). Their philosophy will be examined in the light of that of their male contemporaries and the historical context, and an attempt will be made to assess their contribution as women and as philosophers to the development of philosophical thought. Reflection on women’s roles and the significance of these for cultural development will accompany the reading of the texts. Karen Warren (ed.): An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations Between Men and Women Philosophers (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2008) will be used as a textbook.

*Assessment*

100% continuous assessment, broken down as follows:

* 40% Essay (c. 1,000 words).
* 60% Essay (c. 2,000 words).

Repeat Option: both elements of the continuous assessment can be repeated.

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**Please note that due to the on-going Covid-19 situation there may be changes in terms of attendance policies, assignments, tutorials etc. Please consult with the lecturer in question if you have any questions pay particular attention to notifications from the Department, on Moodle etc.**

**Examinations Marking System**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Letter Grade | Descriptive Heading | % | Class |
| A++ | answer that could not be bettered | 100 | I |
| A+ | exceptional answer displaying unexpected insight | 90 | I |
| A | undoubtedly first class, flawless answer, demonstrating originality | 80 | I |
| A- | almost flawless answer demonstrating some originality | 70 | I |
| B+ | extremely high competence, perhaps displaying limited originality or technical flaws or minor errors | 68 | II-1 |
| B | fundamentally correct and demonstrating overall competence | 65 | II-1 |
| B- | competent performance, substantially correct answer but possibly containing minor flaws or omissions | 60 | II-1 |
| C+ | awarded on the basis of the answer being somewhat better than a C but below a B- | 58 | II-2 |
| C | basically correct answer with minor errors or one major error/omission | 55 | II-2 |
| C- | awarded on the basis of the answer being somewhat below a C but better than a D+ | 50 | II-2 |
| D+ | no more than adequate answer | 48 | III |
| D | adequate answer with serious errors or omissions | 45 | P |
| D- | lowest passing grade, barely deserving to pass | 40 | P |
| E+ | The answer is inadequate and does not deserve to pass. | 38 | F |
| E | The answer fails to address the question properly but displays some knowledge of the material. | 35 | F |
| E- | Answer fails to address the question. | 30 | F |
| F+ | little relevant or correct material but some evidence of engagement with question | 20 | F |
| F | very little relevant or correct material | 10 | F |
| F- | totally irrelevant answer | 0 | F |

# Prizes and Awards

The *Coffey Memorial Prize* is given to the student with the highest overall mark in philosophy in 2nd Arts. The recipient will be conferred with the Award at the Annual Prize Giving Ceremony.

The *James McEvoy Award* is given to the student with the highest mark in the module on Medieval Philosophy. The recipient will be conferred with the Award at the Annual Prize Giving Ceremony.

**Studying Abroad**

Spending some time abroad can be an invaluable part of one’s education. Living in another country teaches us to view our own culture in a new light, allowing us to understand both its weaknesses and its strengths. Language is not just a means of communication; it opens up a world.

Fortunately, all students at Maynooth University have the opportunity to study abroad as part of their degree. Students travel abroad in their third year of study, returning to complete their final year in Maynooth before graduating. All students are invited to apply for study-abroad opportunities *early in their second year*. The entire third year is spent abroad, so that a three-year B.A. degree turns into a four-year B.A. International degree. In other words, one gains an additional year of study.

But there are certain conditions. Thus, all students wishing to study abroad must successfully pass their first- and second-year modules. Furthermore, since one applies to study abroad early in the second year, it is important to do well in one’s first-year modules. This is because our partner universities will judge applications based on first-year results. Finally, students wishing to study abroad in non-EU destinations must pass all of their modules in the summer. It is not possible to go to a non-EU country and sit the autumn repeat examinations.

Students interested in studying abroad should contact the Second Year Coordinator.

**International Students**

International students who wish to study philosophy at Maynooth University are free to attend the modules offered by the Department during the semester or year of their visit. There may be certain restrictions imposed by the student’s home institution.

International students select the modules in which they wish to enrol online, just like everyone else. The international coordinator of the Department approves these choices. After arriving here, if a student needs to change a module (because of a timetabling conflict, for example) they should contact the International Coordinator.

*Examination Procedures for Visiting International Students*

There is no difference in how ‘home’ and visiting international students are assessed. This applies except if in the first semester, a module has a final written examination in January. In its place, international students (who presumably leave the country at Christmas) will do an essay assignment set by the module lecturer.

**Non-Philosophy Students Wishing to Take A Philosophy Module**

Non-philosophy students who wish to take a philosophy module are more than welcome. Before you enrol in a module, it may be useful to speak with the lecturer concerned or with the Head of Department.

**Essay Submission Procedures**

The Department does not accept essays submitted in hard copy. Please submit all tutorial and final essays through Moodle and note that you need to observe the published deadline.

For the final essay of each module, late submissions will not be accepted at all, unless you have obtained an extension from the module lecturer. Submit requests for an extension, stating the reasons for your request, via email before the submission due date, to the lecturer teaching the module. Include supporting documentation, such as a medical certificate. The lecturer will let you know his or her decision. Please note that extensions cannot be granted beyond the end of the relevant examination period.

*A Note on Plagiarism*

In the Internet age, plagiarism—as the presentation of another’s work as one’s own is called—has become so easy that many universities, including Maynooth, now ask students to submit their essays via Turnitin, which is a software that helps detect similarity. It ‘reads’ an essay against millions of sources (including even other student essays) in the database. Cases of plagiarism are automatically referred to the Head of Department, who will proceed according to the University’s published policy, which is available at this link:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20Updated%20July%202019_0.pdf>

**Guidelines on Referencing and Bibliography**

Referencing your sources in academic essay-writing is essential. There are several referencing styles in existence, such as for instance: the APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), Chicago/ Turabian, MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association) style and the Author-Date system (often referred to as the ‘Harvard’ system of referencing). The Author/ Date system of referencing, however, is not very suitable for essays in philosophy.

The Philosophy Department recommends students to follow the guidelines on referencing provided in the *Modern Humanities Research Association: Style Book*, [*MHRA Style Guide*] which is available online at <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style>., and to use footnotes (rather than endnotes).

**Maynooth Writing Centre**

https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/writing-centre

The Maynooth University Writing Centrehas been established by the Centre for Teaching and Learning to support student academic writing.

**The Writing Centre is located in Room 001 (Ground Floor) School of Education Building, on the North Campus.**