

# “Philosophy in the world” assignment

PHIL 102, Hendricks, Spring 2018

**DUE DATE: Friday, April 6, by 5pm**

The purpose of this assignment is to help you to see that philosophical content, philosophical activity, can be found in many places, not just in texts or classes specifically labeled “philosophy.”

You will be submitting this assignment by working on the main website for the course (just like how you post your discussion summaries). Why am I asking you to post this assignment publicly? What you are talking about in this assignment can be of value not only to the instructor and TAs and students in the course, but to many other people. What philosophy is, is rather a mystery to quite a few people, and I think it could be useful to many to have a list of ideas about the nature of philosophy and how we can see it all around us. So I’m asking you to do this assignment publicly. However, you have the option of either using a pseudonym, making your assignment password-protected so only people in the course can see it, or private just to Christina so no one else can see it. The choice is up to you.

You can do this assignment either as an individual or with one or two other people. See below for details on this.

**There are three options for this assignment. Please choose one of (A), (B) or (C).** BE SURE ALSO TO SEE THE END OF THE DOCUMENT FOR IMPORTANT DETAILS FOR ALL OPTIONS!

## **Option (A): Find philosophical content or activity in the world beyond the class**

1. Find something out in the world beyond the course that you think counts as an example of philosophical content, or thinking, or a philosophical activity. It must be something that isn’t obviously connected to philosophy (e.g., a philosophy blog would obviously be connected to philosophy, or a newspaper column like The Stone from the *New York Times*, which is written by philosophers: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/category/the-stone/>).
  - There are many different options for this assignment, from novels to films to video games to tv shows to everyday activities. It’s up to you what you want to pick to talk about.
2. Describe the activity or artifact you have found, and give a link to it if it’s on the web.
3. Argue for why the activity or artifact counts as philosophical.
  - a. Do so by first defining what philosophy means to you, and referring to at least one philosopher we have discussed in class to show how this definition fits what they do. Give details about what the philosopher says or does to support your claim that this definition fits with their work, referring to specific things in the texts where relevant.
  - b. Then argue for why and how the activity or artifact you have found counts as philosophical under this definition.
4. Finally, include somewhere in your post (doesn’t have to be at the end) an explanation of one way in which you engage in philosophical activity in your life outside of class, based on the definition of philosophy you have given earlier. If you can’t think of anything, talk to Christina for help!
5. You may include with your post an image or embedded video or audio file, if you wish, but note:
  - The images or audio files you post must be either public domain or licensed to allow reuse. And if they are the latter, they must be attributed to their original creator correctly. Here is a resource to explain what I mean by this, and how you can correctly attribute images: <http://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:PDCCLicenses>. If you include any images that are not clearly marked

as public domain or licensed for reuse, they will be removed and points will be taken off for not following instructions.

- Videos posted on YouTube or Vimeo can be embedded into the assignment even if they aren't licensed for reuse.

### **How long the text should be, if you're doing Option A as an individual**

I don't have a hard and fast rule for this; basically it should be as long as necessary to include all the elements noted above. Still, I don't think you can do this well in less than 500 words at a minimum, and I don't think it needs to be more than 1500 words at a maximum (which doesn't mean that you should try to hit the maximum, and add in unnecessary things to do so!).

### **If you choose to do Option A in a group**

- There cannot be more than three people in a group for this assignment.
- Your group will need to meet with Christina to write up a task list of who is going to do what, to split up the tasks evenly, and to get the site set up so you can all work on the same post.
- For part 1 above, you will need to discuss at least two activities or artifacts outside the class instead of just one (you can do more than that if you wish, but it's not necessary).
- Part 3a above can be the same for both activities or artifacts discussed in part 1, but 3b will clearly be different for each.
- Each person in the group will have to include a separate section for part 4, above, talking about what they do in their own lives. These should not significantly overlap with each other.
- The text for the assignment must be at least 800 words.
- 80% of the mark for the assignment for each person will be a group mark: everyone will get the same mark for this portion, based on the quality of the assignment overall; 20% of the mark for the assignment will be based on a mark for the particular portion each student is responsible for, according to the task list agreed upon earlier in the meeting with Christina.

### **Option (B): Go to a “philosophers’ café” and write about that experience**

This is one specific version of the assignment above, one particular way to find philosophy out in the world beyond the class (only this time the activity *is* clearly labeled as philosophical!). This assignment requires participation in one of [SFU's Philosophers' Cafés](#) and a written response reflecting on your experience. It involves “community-based experiential learning” (CBEL), which means that you have the opportunity to get out of the classroom and apply your newfound disciplinary knowledge to a local community context. This specific experience will allow you to participate in philosophical discussions in a non-academic setting and reflect on whether or not you find philosophical dialogue to be a useful approach to public engagement.

### **What is a Philosophers' Café?**

Philosophers' Cafés are public forums held at local venues in which community members engage in open, friendly, and respectful dialogue in a relaxed and informal setting. These types of “cafes” have existed for centuries in several forms all over the world, but have had a renaissance in the past few decades. Two well-known contemporary examples of philosophers' café are the “cafés-philos” started in France in 1992 and the “Socrates Cafes” started in the US in 1996. For a history of the movement, read László Nemes' article [Salons, Cafes, and Pubs: The European Tradition of Doing Philosophy in Public](#).

SFU's Philosophers' Café is a local rendition – it is a series of informal public discussions initiated in 1998 that occur numerous times a month in varied locations throughout the Metro Vancouver area

## What do you need to do?

Participate in one of SFU's Philosophers' Cafés (they are free and no registration is necessary) – check out the schedule here and choose a topic that interests you and is located in a place that is easy for you to get to: <https://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/about/program-units/philosophers-cafe/philosophers-cafe-schedule/cafe-schedule-by-date.html>

Write a post on the main course website in which you:

1. Describe the experience at the Philosophers' Café: What was the topic? Where was it held? How many people attended? How was the conversation structured (lecture, small group discussions, a mix of both, etc.)?
2. Reflect on the experience of attending: What *assumptions or expectations* did you bring to the situation (including assumptions about the topic and other persons involved in the discussion) and how did they affect what you did during the session? Did you come away feeling differently about the specific topic discussed?
3. Connect this experience to your academic work in the course
  - a. Give a definition of philosophy that is grounded in what we have read in class (similar to what you need to do for option (A), above). Refer to a specific philosopher and say how this definition fits what they say or do. Give details about what they say or do to support your claim, referring to specific things in the texts where relevant.
  - b. Then discuss the following: Did the experience of attending a philosophers' café enrich your understanding of what philosophy is? How did this experience affect your earlier thoughts about what philosophy is (if at all)? Does it fit with the definition of philosophy you have given?
4. Discuss civic aspects of the experience: After having participated in a public philosophical discussion, articulate whether or not you think these types of discussions in the community could be useful, either to individuals or to the larger society. Why or why not?
5. You may include with your post an image or embedded video or audio file, if you wish, but note:
  - The images or audio files you post must be either public domain or licensed to allow reuse. And if they are the latter, they must be attributed to their original creator correctly. Here is a resource to explain what I mean by this, and how you can correctly attribute images: <http://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:PDCCLicenses>. If you include any images that are not clearly marked as public domain or licensed for reuse, they will be removed and points will be taken off for not following instructions.
  - Videos posted on YouTube or Vimeo can be embedded into the assignment even if they aren't licensed for reuse.

## How long should the post be?

If you're writing this as an individual assignment, again, it should be between 500 and 1500 words (just like option A).

## If you want to do Option (B) in a group:

- There cannot be more than three people in a group for this assignment; you can work with people in your small group for the class or with other people instead.
- Your group will need to meet with Christina to write up a task list of who is going to do what, to split up the tasks evenly, and to get the site set up so you can all work on the same post.

- Each person must write a their own thoughts for parts 2 and 4 (above). Part 3a can be the same for the whole post if you want, or you can have different definitions for different people Part 3b should have separate sections for each person, reflecting on how the experience affected their understanding of what philosophy is. You can work together on the other sections, but it must also be clear from the task list who has done what work so Christina can give the individual marks accordingly.
- Just as with option (A), the minimum word count for a group assignment is 800 words.
- 80% of the mark for the assignment for each person will be a group mark: everyone will get the same mark for this portion, based on the quality of the project; 20% of the mark for the assignment will be based on a mark for the particular portion each student is responsible for, according to the task list agreed upon earlier in the meeting with Christina.

### **Option (C): Participate in a UBC student consultation on poverty reduction in BC**

The Centre for Community Engaged Learning at UBC in partnership with two local organizations (The BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and Raise the Rates) is hosting an event on March 8<sup>th</sup> in which a group of UBC students will learn about and provide input into a poverty reduction strategy for British Columbia. The provincial government is asking for public consultation by the end of March, and the idea here is for UBC students to provide their perspective on poverty and how best to address it. You can read more about the strategy process and public consultations, here: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/bcpovertyreduction/>. Another resource to learn more about this work is the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition's website: <http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/>.

You would be working with other UBC students in a group of maybe 30-50, to discuss the issues in small groups. You would need to attend an in-person event to do so.

**Sign up by adding a comment to the Philosophy in the World assignment page** (I won't publish the comments so they won't show up on the site but I'll be able to see them):

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/assignments/philosophy-in-the-world/>

#### ***What do you need to do?***

Attend the event on March 7<sup>th</sup> from 1-3:30PM at the BC Hydro Theatre in the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability (CIRS) and actively participate. If you are registered for the discussion group that meets at 2pm on Wednesdays, but would like to attend this event, please let Christina know.

The event will begin with a short overview of the government consultation process and the recommendations and strategic pillars put forward by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. The majority of the event will consist of small group guided conversation around the policy recommendations and the contribution of students' perspectives and experiences, as students are a crucial demographic to include in this consultation process. A group of graduate students will be recording, compiling, and analyzing the feedback from the participating students, which will then be submitted to the BC government as part of the consultation process.

Write a post on the main course website in which you:

1. Describe the experience at the consultation event: How many people attended? What was discussed? How was the conversation structured (pairs, small group discussions, a discussion amongst everyone, a mix of both, etc.)? Was any document or any other artifact produced during the event? Was there a chance to participate further in any way, after the event? If so, did you do that?
2. Reflect on the experience of attending: What *assumptions or expectations* did you bring to the situation (including assumptions about the topic and other persons involved in the discussion) and how did they affect what you did during the session? Did you come away feeling differently about poverty in BC, or the draft poverty reduction strategy, than you did before? Do you think that university students provided a unique perspective on this issue that may not have been represented if it were a group of non-students?

### 3. Connect this experience to your academic work in the course

- a. Give a definition of philosophy that is grounded in what we have read in class (just as you need to do for the other options for this assignment). Refer to a specific philosopher and say how this definition fits what they say or do. Give details about what they say or do to support your claim, referring to specific things in the texts where relevant.
- b. Then discuss the following: Did the experience of attending this consultation event fit with the definition of philosophy you have given?

### 4. Discuss civic aspects of the experience: Anyone can provide comments on the BC draft poverty reduction strategy, just as individuals. Do you think that participating in an event like this, where you discuss with other people, could provide a better set of comments than if one just commented by oneself? In other words, do you think discussions like this (which are philosophical, insofar as they talk about what we should do, ethically and socially) are useful, either to individuals or to the society at large (including contributing to improvement of government policies, or any other way they might be useful to society)? Why or why not?

### 5. You may include with your post an image or embedded video or audio file, if you wish, but note:

- The images or audio files you post must be either public domain or licensed to allow reuse. And if they are the latter, they must be attributed to their original creator correctly. Here is a resource to explain what I mean by this, and how you can correctly attribute images: <http://wiki.ubc.ca/Documentation:PDCCLicenses>. If you include any images that are not clearly marked as public domain or licensed for reuse, they will be removed and points will be taken off for not following instructions.
- Videos posted on YouTube or Vimeo can be embedded into the assignment even if they aren't licensed for reuse.

### **How long should the post be?**

If you're writing this as an individual assignment, again, it should be between 500 and 1500 words (just like the other options).

### **If you want to do this assignment in a group:**

- There cannot be more than three people in a group for this assignment.
- Your group will need to meet with Christina to write up a task list of who is going to do what, to split up the tasks evenly, and to get the site set up so you can all work on the same post.
- Each person must write a their own thoughts for parts 2 and 4 (above). Part 3a can be the same for the whole post if you want, or you can have different definitions for different people Part 3b should have separate sections for each person, reflecting on how the experience affected their understanding of what philosophy is. You can work together on the other sections, but it must also be clear from the task list who has done what work so Christina can give the individual marks accordingly.
- Just as with the other options, the minimum word count for a group assignment is 800 words.
- 80% of the mark for the assignment for each person will be a group mark: everyone will get the same mark for this portion, based on the quality of the project; 20% of the mark for the assignment will be based on a mark for the particular portion each student is responsible for, according to the task list agreed upon earlier in the meeting with Christina.

## **Important details for all options**

**Citations for quotes and paraphrases:** Just like with an essay, any time you use a quote or you paraphrase an idea from any text (whether from readings assigned for class, or from another source), you must cite the source of that quote or idea. But for this assignment you can cite things differently. Mostly you'll be citing web resources, I would imagine, and all you need to do for that is to give a URL. You can do that by either giving a hyperlink on a phrase ([like this](#)), or by linking to the text of the URL itself, like this: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/> For text-based resources, cite them like you do for the essays for this course, including a bibliography for anything not assigned in the course.

**Avoid plagiarism:** Any use of another's words, including just a sentence or part of a sentence, without citation, constitutes plagiarism. Use of another's ideas without citation does as well. To avoid plagiarism, always give a citation whenever you have taken ideas (even if you have put them into your own words) or direct words from another source. Please see this page on the course website for information on how to avoid plagiarism, especially when you're paraphrasing ideas or quoting from another source. <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/resources/>

**Audience you should write for:** You are writing this assignment as a public resource, so write for someone who is not in the class, has not read the texts, and has not attended the lectures. Explain your view, and the arguments of the philosophers you discuss, in as much depth as would be needed to make them clear to such an audience.

**Late assignments:** If you are submitting your assignment late, you must also submit a "late paper form," accessible on the course website on the page that has this assignment, under "Assignments." Late assignments will receive a 5% per weekday penalty, after the due date and time, unless you have an acceptable excuse for turning in your essay late. There is a 5% per weekend penalty as well. So, if you turn it in after 5pm on Friday, April 6 and before 5pm on Sunday, April 8, it's 5% off. If you turn it in after 5pm Sunday and before 5pm Monday April 9, it's 10% off, etc. This assignment will not be accepted after the date of our final exam, unless there is an emergency or you work out a later due date with Christina. You should contact Christina before turning in a late assignment, unless this is impossible.

### **Marking criteria**

Assignments for all options will be marked according to:

- Whether they fulfill all the requirements listed above for the option chosen
- The clarity and comprehensiveness of the description you give of the activity or artifact "in the world", or the philosophers' café experience, or the consultation on poverty reduction
- The quality of your explanation of your definition of philosophy, and how well you tie it to one of the texts we've read for the course (Have you given specific references to what the philosopher says or does that ties to this definition? Give direct links to the texts!)

For option (A): activity or artifact that is philosophical

- The clarity, depth, and strength of the argument you give for why the activity or artifact you discuss "in the world" is philosophical, based on your definition of philosophy
- The clarity, depth, and strength of the argument you give for why an activity you engage in outside of the course is philosophical, based on your definition of philosophy

For option (B): philosophers' café

- The clarity and depth of your discussion of part 3 for option (B), above, including: the clarity, depth & strength of argument you give for whether or not (and why) the philosophers' café experience fits with the definition of philosophy given in part 3a
- The clarity, depth, and strength of the argument you give for whether and why public discussions of philosophical issues are useful, in your view (part 4 for option (B), above)

For option (C): BC poverty reduction consultation

- The clarity and depth of your discussion of part 3 for option (C), above, including: the clarity, depth, & strength of argument you give for whether or not (and why) the consultation experience fits with the definition of philosophy given in part 3a
- The clarity, depth, and strength of the argument you give for whether and why group consultations like the one you attended could be useful, either for individuals or for the larger society (part 4, for option (C), above)

### **How to submit your assignment**

You will need to submit the assignment on our main course website (just as you are doing for your discussion summaries), and just as with your discussion summaries, you have choices of submitting with your real name or a pseudonym, making it public or using the class password so only other people in the class can see it, or making it private just to Christina.

How to do each of these options is already posted in a video that provides instructions for how to do your discussion summaries (see the third video): <http://blogs.ubc.ca/phil102/assignments/how-to-post-on-this-site/>