PHIL 20: PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING

In Workflow

1. PHIL Committee Chair (brandon.carey@csus.edu)
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Approval Path

1. 2026-08-28T21:58:59Z
   Brandon Carey (brandon.carey): Approved for PHIL Committee Chair
2. 2026-08-28T22:25:59Z
   Russell DiSilvestro (rdisilv): Approved for PHIL Chair
3. 2026-10-07T19:26:14Z
   Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland): Rollback to Initiator
4. 2026-10-13T21:46:35Z
   Brandon Carey (brandon.carey): Approved for PHIL Committee Chair
5. 2026-10-13T23:07:19Z
   Russell DiSilvestro (rdisilv): Approved for PHIL Chair
6. 2026-10-13T23:35:23Z
   Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland): Approved for ALS College Committee Chair
7. 2026-10-13T23:48:48Z
   Matt Schmidtlein (schmidmc): Approved for ALS Dean

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Changes proposed by: Brandon Carey (205073704)

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Catalog Title:
Philosophical Writing

Class Schedule Title:
Philosophical Writing

Academic Group: (College)
ALS - Arts & Letters

Academic Organization: (Department)
Philosophy

Will this course be offered through the College of Continuing Education (CCE)?
No

Catalog Year Effective:
Spring 2027 (2026/2027 Catalog)

Subject Area: (prefix)
PHIL - Philosophy

Catalog Number: (course number)
20

Course ID: (For administrative use only.)
190889

Units:
3

Is the ONLY purpose of this change to update the term typically offered or the enforcement of existing requisites at registration?
No

In what term(s) will this course typically be offered?
Fall, Spring

Does this course require a room for its final exam?
Yes, final exam requires a room

This course complies with the credit hour policy:
Yes

Justification for course proposal:
The Phil Department seeks to update this existing but no longer needed course with a new purpose -- to serve as the department's contribution to the curriculum available for satisfying the Comp II Graduation Requirement.

The proposed update will remake this into PHIL 20, Philosophical Writing, which is proposed as a permanent course in response to its successful launch as PHIL 96W under the campus pilot program for the Lower-Division Writing Intensive/second-semester composition requirement. Developed and offered experimentally, this course provides students in any major with a means of satisfying the Composition II Graduation Requirement through the study and practice of philosophical writing.

The course number PHIL 20 aligns with the already established and well-known ENGL 20, which has served to meet this GR requirement. the original version of PHIL 20 also is among our lower division historical survey courses, now replaced by PHIL 26. So, giving this old course new purpose as the designated course for Philosophy's historical survey and composition II course, makes more sense than creating a new course with a new and unique number.

PHIL 20: Philosophical Writing is grounded in the understanding that the history of philosophy is an extended written conversation in pursuit of wisdom. Through close reading of key texts from antiquity to modernity, students encounter enduring questions about knowledge, reality, personal identity, the good life, and justice while learning how philosophers have used writing to formulate and investigate those questions. Students therefore learn not only about major philosophical ideas and thinkers but also how to participate in philosophical inquiry through their own writing.

PHIL 20 integrates this study of philosophy with advanced college composition. Building on students' introductory composition experience, the course further develops their writing, research, and analytical abilities through the conventions of philosophical discourse. It also introduces students to philosophy's rich history of composition beyond the contemporary argumentative essay. Students read and write in historically significant forms – including aphorism, dialogue, meditation, letters, and exploratory essay – and examine what different choices of form have allowed philosophers to accomplish. Through close reading, frequent informal and formal writing, feedback, reflection, and substantive revision, students come to understand writing as a process of inquiry and participation in a disciplinary conversation.

Making PHIL 20 permanent will preserve the distinctive curricular contribution developed through the pilot: a Composition II course in which students strengthen broadly applicable writing abilities while learning how writing creates, communicates, and shapes knowledge within a discipline. The course will provide a durable disciplinary option for fulfilling the Composition II requirement through coursework also applicable to General Education Humanities and the Philosophy major.

Course Description: (Not to exceed 90 words and language should conform to catalog copy.)
Offers a lower division writing intensive experience in philosophy through several historically relevant forms such as dialogue, meditation, aphorism, letters, enquiry, and treatise. Introduces philosophy from antiquity through contemporary periods, exploring such themes as the foundations of knowledge, nature of reality, basis of a good life and just society, existence of God, and the nature of the self. Introduces the principles of philosophical writing and reading, the development of philosophy as a written discipline, and the challenges and opportunities this presents. This course fulfills the Composition II Graduation Requirement.

Are one or more field trips required with this course?
No

Fee Course?
No

Is this course designated as Service Learning?
No

Is this course designated as Curricular Community Engaged Learning?
No

Does this course require safety training?
No

Does this course require personal protective equipment (PPE)?
No

Does this course have prerequisites?
Yes

Prerequisite:
Prerequisite(s): Completion of ENGL 5 or ENGL 5M OR ENGL 11 or ENGL 11M or equivalent with a C- or better; sophomore standing (must have completed 30 units prior to registration).

Prerequisites Enforced at Registration?
Yes

Does this course have corequisites?
No

Graded:
Letter

Approval required for enrollment?
No Approval Required

Course Component(s) and Classification(s):
Lecture

Lecture Classification
CS#03 - Lecture Composition/Counseling/Case Study (K-factor=1 WTU per unit)
Lecture Units
3

Is this a paired course?
No

Is this course crosslisted?
No

Can this course be repeated for credit?
No

Can the course be taken for credit more than once during the same term?
No

Description of the Expected Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies:

List the Expected Learning Outcomes and their accompanying Assessment Strategies (e.g., portfolios, examinations, performances, pre-and post-tests, conferences with students, student papers). Click the plus sign to add a new row.

	Expected Learning Outcome	Assessment Strategies
1	Explain key philosophical concepts as they arise in the different historical periods from Antiquity to the contemporary period, including knowledge, reality, reason, substance, identity, mind, causation, experience, etc.	Weekly Philosophical Reflections; Major Assignment 1: Dramatic Dialogue; Participation
2	Analyze how diverse historical forms—including dialogue, meditation, epistolary, exploratory essay, and treatise—shape philosophical arguments by reconstructing their structural logic and rhetorical strategies in writing.	Weekly Philosophical Reflections; Major Assignment 1: Dramatic Dialogue; Major Assignment 2: Meditation or Epistolary Exchange; Participation
3	Demonstrate comprehension of diverse historical forms—such as dialogue, meditation, epistolary, exploratory essay, and treatise—by textually translating a philosophical argument from one form into another while preserving its logical integrity.	Weekly Philosophical Reflections; Major Assignment 2: Meditation or Epistolary Exchange; Participation
4	Compose textual analyses that evaluate how a philosopher's choice of historical form—such as dialogue, meditation, epistolary, exploratory essay, and treatise—dictates their method of proof, handling of objections, and presentation of core premises.	Major Assignment 1: Dramatic Dialogue; Major Assignment 2: Meditation or Epistolary Exchange
5	Apply key principles of philosophical interpretation and engagement, for example the principle of charitable interpretation, annotation, reconstruction, and critique.	Weekly Philosophical Reflections; Participation
6	Develop critical self-awareness of one's own philosophical writing and ability to communicate philosophical ideas to various audiences in various forms.	Revision Memos; Semester Writing Reflections; ePortfolio Capstone

Attach a list of the required/recommended course readings and activities:

PHIL 20 Philosophical Writing Syllabus.pdf

Is this course required in a degree program (major, minor, graduate degree, certificate?)

No

Does the proposed change or addition cause a significant increase in the use of College or University resources (lab room, computer)?

No

Will there be any departments affected by this proposed course?

Yes

Indicate which department(s) will be affected by the proposed course:

Department(s)
English

Attach evidence of consultation with the affected department

PHIL 20 English Consultation.pdf

I/we as the author(s) of this course proposal agree to provide a new or updated accessibility checklist to the Dean's office prior to the semester when this course is taught utilizing the changes proposed here.

I/we agree

University Learning Goals

Undergraduate Learning Goals:

Competence in the disciplines
Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world
Intellectual and practical skills
Personal and social responsibility
Integrative learning

Is this course required as part of a teaching credential program, a single subject, or multiple subject waiver program (e.g., Liberal Studies, Biology) or other school personnel preparation program (e.g., School of Nursing)?

No

Is this a General Education (GE) or Graduation Requirement (GR) course or is it being considered for GE/GR?

Is this a General Education (GE) course or is it being considered for GE?

Yes

In which GE area(s) does this apply?

3B. Humanities
Second Semester Composition

Which GE objective(s) does this course satisfy?

Read, write, and understand relatively complex and sophisticated English prose.
Construct a non-fallacious verbal argument, recognize fallacious arguments, and follow the verbal arguments of others.
Find and use common information resources, engage in specialized library research, use computers and seek out appropriate expert opinion and advice.
Develop an acquaintance and understanding of cultures and major dynamic social institutions which affect one's life.
Possess a significant and useful understanding of peoples from a diversity of cultures and backgrounds, including women and ethnic and other minority groups who have been the objects of prejudice and adverse discrimination within our society.

Attach Course Syllabus with Detailed Outline of Weekly Topics:

PHIL 20 Philosophical Writing Syllabus.pdf

Syllabi must include: GE area outcomes listed verbatim; catalog description of the course; prerequisites, if any; student learning objectives; assignments; texts; reading lists; materials; grading system; exams and other methods of evaluation.

Will more than one section of this course be offered?

Yes

Provide a description of what would be considered common to all sections and what might typically vary between sections:

**Note: The objectives listed in the section above are not most recent Area 3B Learning Objectives, because those are not available to select in CourseLeaf.*

PHIL 20 integrates the study of substantive philosophical questions with advanced instruction in the reading and writing practices of the discipline. Through close engagement with philosophical texts and sustained practice in one or more forms of philosophical writing, students examine how choices of form, audience, method, and expression shape philosophical inquiry while developing their own capacities for clear, rigorous, and reflective written thought. All version of the course will maintain the shared course learning outcomes and Composition II requirements for sustained writing, feedback, reflection, and revision.

Please write a statement indicating the means and methods for evaluating the extent to which the objectives of the GE Area(s) and any writing requirements are met for all course sections:

Individual sections may vary in the philosophical questions, texts, traditions, historical periods, and authors examined, as well as in the forms of philosophical writing students read and practice. Instructors may also vary the organization and sequence of the course, the design of particular writing assignments, and the relative emphasis placed on specific philosophical methods or genres.

What steps does the department plan to take to ensure that instructors comply with the respective category criteria and who is responsible?

The Department Chair and Department Curriculum Committee will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the applicable General Education and Composition II category criteria. Instructors will be provided with the approved course syllabus, shared learning outcomes, and category requirements. The Chair and/or Curriculum Committee will review the syllabus for each section every semester to confirm alignment in course content, writing requirements, assignments, opportunities for feedback and revision, and assessment of the required learning outcomes. Continued compliance and student achievement will also be evaluated through the department's annual program assessment process, and the Chair and Curriculum Committee will work with instructors to address any identified areas of misalignment.

General Education - Area 3B: Humanities

Section 1.

Indicate in written statements how the course meets the following criteria for Area 3B. Relate the statements to the course syllabus and outline. Be as succinct as possible.

Is broad in scope or survey in nature.

Both. PHIL 20 introduces philosophy from antiquity through contemporary periods through enduring questions concerning knowledge, reality, selfhood, God, the good life, and the just society. The syllabus and course outline survey philosophical texts, traditions, and historically relevant forms of writing, such as dialogue, meditation, aphorism, letters, enquiry, and treatise, while examining the development of philosophy as a written discipline.

Develops an understanding of and appreciation for the diversity of the human community.

The course brings philosophical traditions and voices from different cultures, historical periods, and social locations into sustained conversation. As reflected in the syllabus and course outline, students compare Greek, Chinese, Indian, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian approaches to shared philosophical questions; engage the work of women and other historically excluded thinkers; and examine how cultural context, institutional access, audience, and forms of writing shape philosophical participation and the preservation of ideas.

Develops a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the heritage being studied and transmits a knowledge of the Western and Non-Western cultural heritage in the humanities. Students should be able to:

Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.

Students learn and apply central conventions and methods of humanistic inquiry, including close reading, charitable interpretation, textual annotation, argument reconstruction, historical and cultural contextualization, and analysis of genre and form. As reflected in the syllabus and course outline, students practice these methods through philosophical reflections, sustained writing in historically relevant forms requiring substantive revision and reflection on their development as readers and writers of philosophy.

Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.

Students investigate how cultural understandings of reality, knowledge, human nature, moral responsibility, and justice have shaped -- and been shaped by -- the development of human societies. Through readings and writing assignments spanning Western and non-Western traditions, students analyze how historical context, social institutions, access to education, and forms of communication influence the production, transmission, and authority of philosophical ideas.

Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.

Students compare and analyze differing philosophical conceptions of human nature, identity, agency, and flourishing across cultures and historical periods. Course readings and writing assignments engage such contrasting accounts as the rational or embodied self, the relational and socially situated person, the enduring soul, non-self, and the autonomous moral agent, asking students to examine the assumptions and implications of each.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

Students trace the historical development and transmission of philosophical ideas across cultures and civilizations from antiquity through contemporary periods. Through close study of Western and non-Western traditions, students examine how changing commitments concerning reality, knowledge, faith, reason, virtue, justice, and human flourishing both express the animating values of their historical contexts and contribute to the development of subsequent intellectual and cultural traditions.

In presenting the contribution and perspectives of people, the coursework addresses at least two of the following:
- **Women**
- **Ethnicity**
- **Socio-economic status**
- **Religious affiliation**
- **Disabilities**
- **Gays & lesbians**

Women: Women philosophers are presented as constitutive contributors to the development of philosophical thought rather than as supplementary figures. The course examines thinkers such as Hypatia, Hildegard of Bingen, Christine de Pizan, Elisabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, and Émilie Du Châtelet, with attention to their philosophical contributions and to how gender shaped their access to education, intellectual authority, choice of written form, and subsequent place in the philosophical tradition.

Religious affiliation: The course examines philosophical inquiry within and across Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian traditions. Students analyze how differing religious commitments and intellectual traditions shaped approaches to reality, selfhood, knowledge, faith, reason, ethics, and the existence of God, as well as how ideas were preserved, translated, contested, and transmitted among cultures.

Socio-economic status: The course examines how philosophy developed from a practice pursued by people in varied social positions —including enslaved people, teachers, religious figures, courtiers, physicians, and others—into an increasingly institutionalized discipline. Students analyze how access to education, literacy, universities, credentialing, patronage, and technologies of textual production shaped who could participate in philosophical inquiry, which forms they could use, and whose contributions were

preserved and recognized as philosophy. The course also considers how developments such as vernacular writing, expanding literacy, and inexpensive print widened philosophy's readership and participation.

Includes a writing component described on course syllabus

l) If course is lower division, formal and/or informal writing assignments encouraging students to think through course concepts using at least one of the following: periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, periodic formal writing assignments, periodic journals, reading logs, other. Writing in lower division courses need not be graded, but must, at a minimum, be evaluated for clarity and proper handling of terms, phrases, and concepts related to the course.

2) If course is upper division, a minimum of 1500 words of formal, graded writing. [Preferably there should be more than one formal writing assignment and each writing assignment (e.g. periodic lab reports, exams which include essay questions, a research/term paper etc.) should be due in stages throughout the semester to allow the writer to revise after receiving feedback from the instructor. Include an indication of how writing is to be evaluated and entered into course grade determination.]

PHIL 20 revision seeks to be designated as meeting Comp II GR requirements and as such substantially exceeds the minimum lower-division writing requirement. Students complete at least 5,000 words through weekly philosophical reflections, formal writing projects, revision memos, and a culminating ePortfolio. These assignments require students to use writing to interpret texts, reconstruct and evaluate arguments, explore philosophical problems, and experiment with forms appropriate to philosophical inquiry. Student writing is evaluated for conceptual accuracy, clarity and precision, appropriate use of philosophical terminology, critical engagement with course ideas and texts, rhetorical awareness, and control of written expression. Major assignments include instructor feedback, reflection, and substantive revision.

Section 2.

If you would like, you may provide further information that might help the G.E. Course Review Committee understand how this course meets these criteria and/or the G.E. Program Objectives found in the CSUS Policy Manual, General Education Program, Section I.B.

PHIL 20 advances several General Education Program Objectives through an integrated study of philosophical ideas and the forms in which they have been developed and communicated. Sustained writing, close reading, argument reconstruction, and revision develop written communication and critical thinking, while engagement with Western and non-Western traditions builds intercultural and global understanding. By examining how philosophical questions, forms, and institutions have shaped – and been shaped by – cultural context, social position, and access to intellectual authority, the course also encourages students to seek diverse perspectives and connect disciplinary learning to enduring personal, moral, and social questions.

Reviewer Comments:

Rebekkah Mulholland (rebekkah.mulholland) (Wed, 07 Oct 2026 19:26:15 GMT): Rollback: Thanks for proposal. Committee has following comments: Remove attachments, only need syllabus. ELO 1: Two verbs. Reduce to one. ELO #2: Two verbs. Reduce to one. Remove "read"? ELO 3 reads strangely..."demonstrate experience" ELO 4: Rewrite using a Blooms or similar verb-Agreed Use the recently passed GE outcomes in proposal.

Key: 12075