



Figure 1 With Strings Two, 1983

**PHIL 1500—Major Issues in
Philosophy**

Professor: Corey Beckford

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Meeting Time & Location: N/A

**Office hours: by appointment (book on
Calendy via**

**[https://www.coreybeckford.org/office-
hours](https://www.coreybeckford.org/office-hours))**

Course Description

This course studies basic topics of philosophy, such as the nature of mind, criteria of knowledge, justification of ethical values, and the existence of God.

This course satisfies the pathways flexible core at Baruch, the learning goals for the pathways can be found [here](#). It is also part of the base curriculum in Philosophy at Baruch, the learning goals for the Philosophy Department can be found [here](#).

In this course students will learn to:

- Identify, understand, and express key philosophical positions in a variety of philosophical genres (including epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy)
- Identify and understand key philosophical positions of several intellectual eras and philosophical traditions;
- Understand and critically evaluate (both orally and in writing) philosophical arguments;
- Articulate one's own stance on philosophical problems and defend one's stance by analyzing relevant philosophical arguments;
- Apply philosophical concepts and modes of reasoning to contemporary issues
- Reflect critically and empathetically on one's own and others' rationality, freedom, identity and moral, political, and epistemic agency;

Considering the listed course description, we will examine a major theme of Philosophy, namely, human contact. Our engagement with this one theme will cover the basic topics of the course description. This broader theme will allow us to narrow in on the big themes of the course. Specifically, we will study the theme of human contact from the perspective of how human beings think about their collective situations as under laws of Nature on Earth, and the Universe more broadly; and from the perspective of how human beings think about their situation together on the same planet. Said differently, we will try to think about human contact from a cosmological and cosmopolitan

perspective. Caveat: we will try to balance both perspectives, however, we will very likely lean more into a cosmopolitan perspective.

Assignments

Three quizzes: 25%

Participation: 10%

In-class Midterm: 30%

In-class Final Exam: 35%

Information regarding the structure of the three quizzes, in-class midterm, and final can be found on Blackboard under the folder labeled “Assignment Instructions”. There you can also find instructions regarding Awards and the Easter Egg System.

Course Policies

Classroom etiquette is crucial for a healthy, safe, and thriving intellectual space. To facilitate that it is important that we all uphold the following rules and policies.

No electronics allowed during class. That includes laptops, cellphones, gaming devices, and anything that can grant internet access. It is important that everyone respects each other’s class time by not distracting each other with electronic devices. Thus, bring a writing utensil and a notebook for note-taking during class. This will also help you adjust to in class writing for quizzes, the midterm, and final.

No interrupting your fellow classmates when they’re speaking. It is important to allow everyone to articulate their thoughts. Of course, everyone should also keep in mind that a question exceeding 3-5 minutes is pushing it. Remember: everyone wants a chance to share their ideas, ask questions, and discuss the class material.

Attendance is mandatory.

Bullying and discrimination are not welcome in our classroom. If you’re experiencing any of these things please contact me, and we can discuss how to move forward.

Plagiarism of any kind is unacceptable and will result in an automatic zero on an assignment, and, if done more than once, a zero for the course.

Disabilities Services: Memo from Baruch’s Provost

https://provost.baruch.cuny.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/5/2020/01/Pregnant_Parenting_Students.pdf

Academic Resources at Baruch College

Baruch College offers a wide range of services including tutoring, support for writing and speaking English clearly, general academic advisement. For a more complete list and description, see:

<https://provost.baruch.cuny.edu/facultyhandbook/academicsupportservices/>

***Please sign here to acknowledge that you have read the above course policies**

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Schedule

***Note: All required readings will be provided *via* Black Board.**

Class Date	Reading	Topics (T) & Related Questions (Q)	Assignments , Quizzes or Exams
08/25/2023	Course mechanics: Introductions; Survey of Syllabus; Discussion;		
09/01/2023	Confucius ➤ <i>The Analects</i> , book 12	(T) Good action; good character; the importance of lawful human orders;	Return signed Syllabus;

09/08/202 3	Zhuangzi, ➤ <i>Zhuangzi</i> , chapter 11 <i>Leave it be</i> , <i>Leave it alone</i>	(T) Good action; good character; the importance of lawful human orders;	
09/15/202 3	Plato ➤ <i>Timaeus</i> selections: 30- 49a	(T) Cosmos; Cosmopolitan;	
09/22/202 3	Montaigne ➤ <i>Of Friendship</i>	(T) Friendship (Q) What is friendship? Is friendship a fundamental form of human contact and relations, or is it invented? What's natural about friendship, and what's technological?	1 st Quiz
09/29/202 3	G.W.F. Leibniz ➤ <i>Dialogue on Human Freedom and the Origin of Evil</i> (1695) (111-117) ➤ <i>On the Ultimate Origination of Things</i> (1697) (149-155) ➤ <i>On Nature Itself</i> (1698)(155-166)	(T) Best Possible World; Nature- as-Nature; Monogenesis; Polygenesis	

10/06/2023	<p>David Hume</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i>, Sections VI-VIII, (38-68) 	(T) Moral principles of action; Proper and improper behavior in human contact;	
10/13/2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ John Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i>, Chapter V (115-126) 	(T) Property; Property rights;	2 nd Quiz
10/20/2023	<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The Social Contract</i> (163-187) 	(T) Human contact as contract;	
10/27/2023	<p>Immanuel Kant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Towards Perpetual Peace</i> ➤ <i>From The Metaphysics of Morals and Lectures: Duties Regarding Animals</i> 	<p>(T) Moral cosmopolitanism ; Animal ethics;</p> <p>(Q) What Counts as a Morally Worthy Action? Do human beings have a duty or obligation to always act morally?</p>	Mid-term exam
11/03/2023	<p>Alain LeRoy Locke</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Cultural Value and Ideological Peace</i> (1931) 	(T) Cultural Cosmopolitanism	

	<p>Optional reading, but will still be covered in connection with (T) and (Q): Édouard Glissant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Poetics of Relation</i>, (45-63) 		
11/10/2023	<p>Martin Luther King, Jr.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Where Do We Go From Here?: Chaos or Community</i>, The World House (177-202) 	(T) Human communities; Forging bonds; Breaking ties; Cosmopolitanism as a global brotherhood;	3 rd Quiz
11/17/2023	<p>Frantz Fanon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>, Concerning Violence (35-45) ➤ Simone Weil, <i>The Illiad, or the Poem of Force</i> (321-330) 	(T) Violence; Force	
11/24/2023	<p>Thomas Nagel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “Moral Luck” (1979) 	(T) Luck	
12/01/2023	<p>Jean-Luc Nancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Of Struction</i> 	(T) Nature-as-Nature vs Nature-as-Technology;	
12/08/2023	<p>Toni Morrison</p>	(T) Intergalactic Contact & Race;	Final exam date: TBA

	<p>➤ <i>Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination</i>, chapter 1, <i>black matters</i></p> <p>+</p> <p>Derrick Bell, Jr.</p> <p>➤ <i>Space Traders</i></p>	<p>Imagination & Contact with non-Human Beings</p>	
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