I. Introduction
The course seeks to understand as well as answer a number of central questions in philosophy through the writings of contemporary and major Western philosophers as well as through the close study of several fundamental issues that have arisen in the course of the development of the Western philosophical tradition, such as free will, our knowledge of the "external" world, and the meaning and value of truth and justice.

Readings will be drawn from the writings of major philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Leibniz, Kant, John Stuart Mill, and Bertrand Russell, as well as prominent contemporary philosophers such as Peter Singer, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Daniel Dennett, Martha Nussbaum, John Searle, Bernard Williams, Judith Jarvis Thomson, Hilary Putnam and Thomas Nagel.

The main focus of the course, however, will be on the questions: Why be good? What is consciousness? Do persons have rights? If so, in virtue of what do they have them?

What do human beings know, if anything, about the world they inhabit and how do they know it? If persons do not have free will, does it still make sense to praise and blame them?

The course is more about thinking and thinking things through than it is about coverage or the memorization of a bunch of facts.
Topics will include arguments for and against the existence of God, the value of religious belief and faith, the problem of evil, the nature of scientific explanation, perception and illusion, minds, brains and programs, personal identity ("who am I"), freedom and determinism, moral "truth" v. moral relativity, forgiveness and justice, and what makes life worth living . . . to name a few.

The course is designed to be an introduction to philosophy and its problems and as such it is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive. The classic materials are selected to provide a basis for understanding central debates within the field. The course is divided into four sections and each section is devoted to a key area within Western philosophy, in the areas of epistemology, general metaphysics, ontology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, ethics:

- **Preamble:** "What is Thinking?"
- **PART I:** REASON & FAITH
- **PART II:** MIND & BODY
- **PART III:** KNOWLEDGE & REALITY
- **PART IV:** ETHICS, JUSTICE & THE GOODLIFE

In its aim and format the course is more an invitation to do philosophy than an introduction. Introductions seek to map out a territory or lay the groundwork for more detailed study. There will be some of that here, but insofar as invitations beckon and introductions point, the course beckons students to the study of philosophy rather than points the way.

The Syllabus for PHIL 1A: Introduction to Philosophy has been listed among the top ten most popular philosophy syllabi in the world for a number of years now.

"The Ten Most Popular Philosophy Syllabi in the World"
http://www.dancohen.org/blog/posts/10_most_popular_philosophy_syllabi

**II. Class Times**
The course will meet on **Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:20 PM.**

**III. Course Requirements and Reading**
Course Requirements will remain more or less the same as in prior years. Professor Teuber has been teaching the course at Harvard (in the Summer) and at Brandeis (in the Fall) for more than ten years now. This Fall at Brandeis it will follow the same trajectory it did last year and draw on many of the same readings. The public Site at Harvard and the Resources and Links page from 2014 are still online and will give you a pretty good idea of what the course this Fall is likely to be up to.

Take a look:

[Harvard Introduction to Philosophy](http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~phils4/)

[Harvard Intro: Resources, Links & Lecture Notes](http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~phils4/notes.html)
NOTE: The only required book is *WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy* by Thomas Nagel, Oxford University Press. All other readings will be available online on the course site. You will not be required to purchase a textbook or course pak, but the *Norton Introduction to Philosophy (2015)* has most of the course readings between its two covers and is strongly recommended.

IV. Writing

Four short papers are required on topics growing out of the readings and class discussions. The short papers should be no more than 5 to 6 pages in length. Paper topics will be available seven (7) to ten (10) days before a paper is due as well as publicly shared on the web to allow everyone in the class to show the question, if they wish, to friends and family and argue with them about it. The first of the four papers will not be graded. It will be a credit/no credit writing exercise. What a credit/no credit exercise is will be explained on the first day of class. There will also be three “take home” Reader Response Exercises which will require no more than a paragraph or two.

V. Rewriting

You will have the opportunity to rewrite one, perhaps two, of the three graded papers. Rewrites must be accompanied by a copy of the original paper with the comments, plus a cover sheet, stating how you have improved the paper and spelling out what you did to make your paper, now rewritten, that much more wonderful. The grade you receive on your rewrite will be the grade you will receive for the paper. It will not be an average of the two grades. More will be said about rewriting on the first day of class and at the time the rewrite option kicks in.

VI. Examinations

There will be a quiz in class near the end of the Fall term). The quiz should take about twenty minutes. There will be NO FINAL EXAM and NO MIDTERM. Other than the quiz, there will be no examinations of any kind.
VII. Participation
You may meet the participation requirement by participating in class discussions, attending discussion sessions, talking and corresponding with family and friends as well as classmates, by keeping a diary or journal, by communicating on Facebook. At the end of the semester everyone will be given the opportunity to send an email describing what they did in and outside the class to meet the requirement.

VIII. Attendance
The attendance policy is currently under review. The policy will be announced.

IX. Grading
The course calls for four short papers, the first of which will be a credit/no credit paper, three short reader response exercises, a quiz and participation. Assuming that everyone receives “credit” on the first paper, the three remaining graded papers will be weighted as follows: 35% for your best effort, 25% for your next best effort and 20% for the one which is least successful of the three. The three reading exercises will count 10% and the quiz and participation will each count 5% of your final grade.
X. Teaching Assistants
Several Teaching Assistants have been assigned to the Course. The Teaching Assistants will be primarily responsible for reading your papers and making comments on them as well as participating in and helping to lead discussion sessions. The Teaching Assistants will also be available to discuss your ideas for how you wish to address this or that paper topic. I shall read all the papers before grades are handed out and independently decide what grades each paper should receive. If you are convinced an error has been made, first talk with your teaching assistant with whom you have been working. If you are still not satisfied, you may bring your paper to me.

XI. Course Web Site
The Course has its own Latte Web Site.

XII. Office Hours
I will hold office hours (RABB 306) on Thursdays from 3:30 until 4:20 and by appointment. If you wish to leave messages for me, send me an email at teuber@g.harvard.edu or teuber@brandeis.edu. The Teaching Assistants will also hold office hours and be reachable by email. Their hours will be announced in the first week of the Fall semester.

XIII. Academic Integrity
Brandeis expects you to understand and maintain high standards of academic integrity. Breaches of academic integrity are subject to review and disciplinary action by the Administrative Board. Examples include plagiarism, inappropriate collaboration, cheating, duplication of assignments and falsification and misrepresentation of research results. See the Brandeis Policies page at http://www.brandeis.edu/svpse/academicintegrity/

XIV. Resources to Support Academic Integrity
Harvard offers essential information about the use of sources in academic writing.

Guide to Using Resources
http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do

XV. Accessibility and Accommodation Services
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. Academic Services at http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/ offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities, permanent and temporary injuries, and chronic conditions.
XVI. Credit Hours
This is a four credit course that meets three hours per week. Students are expected to spend nine or more hours per week in prep for class, in reading, writing, and discussion.

XVII. Learning Goals
The skills the course develops: sound reasoning, an enlightened use of one’s imagination, the capacity to analyze controversial issues, to entertain points of view contrary to one’s own, to reflect critically on a wide range of human activities and endeavors are invaluable in the study of every disciplines and in the pursuit of any vocation.

Not many seek careers in philosophy. There is much else to do. Even so enrolling in just one philosophy course can make a humongous difference on how well one does in, say, history or physics.

To take but one example, Robert Rubin, Treasury Secretary under Clinton, when asked about his experience as an undergraduate was known to say “[he] took only one course in philosophy in college but;” he said, “it made [him] a better economist.”

The primary aim of philosophy is the study of ideas central to the ways we think and live. Many of our key concepts, such as truth and justice, reason and faith, are to a large degree hidden from us. We think we understand what they mean, but they elude us.

Philosophy brings the ideas we use to make sense of ourselves, ideas we come to take for granted and that habit has made dull, explicitly to light. It makes the invisible visible. It teaches us to become clear, if not absolutely clear, at least clearer about what matters to us most.
Calvin and Hobbes

Get what you can while the getting's good - that's what I say! Might makes right? The winners write the history books!

It's a dog-eat-dog world, so I'll do whatever I have to, and let others argue about whether it's "right" or not.

Hey!

Why'd you do that??

You were in my way. Now you're not. The ends justify the means.

I didn't mean for everyone, you dolt. Just me!

Aah...

As far as I'm concerned, the ends justify the means.