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:

- **Introduction and Organization**
  - Preamble: “What is Philosophy?”
- **PART I:** REASON & FAITH
- **PART II:** MIND & BODY
- **PART III:** KNOWLEDGE & REALITY
- **PART IV:** ETHICS, JUSTICE & THE GOOD LIFE

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 be handed out on the first day of class, but the requirements will remain more or less the same as in prior years. This summer Professor Teuber taught the course at Harvard and the course at Brandeis will follow a similar track and draw on many of the same readings. Take a look at how the course is described on the Harvard Site. This will give you a good idea of what the course at Brandeis in the Fall is most likely to be up to.

**Introduction to Philosophy**
http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~phils4/
**NOTE:** For the course at Brandeis this Fall all the readings will be made 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. It is the best introductory text available and will help to *bring home* the many problems we shall tackle and questions we shall ask.

---

**IV. Writing**

Four short papers are required on topics growing out of the readings and class discussions. The short papers should be about 5 pages in length. Paper topics will be available at least five (5) or seven (7) 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 family and friends and argue with them about it. The first of the four short papers will not be graded. It will be a credit/no-credit paper. What a credit/no-credit paper 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 receive for the assignment. It will not be an average of the two grades. More will be said about rewriting on Day One and at the time the rewrite option kicks in.

---

**VI. Examinations**

There will be three short reading response exercises and a quiz in class (near the end of the Fall term). The reading response exercises will require no more than a paragraph or two. More will be said on the first day about the reading response exercises and the quiz which should only take up about twenty minutes of class time.

There will be no final exam and no mid-term. **Other than the quiz, there will be no written 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 on the first day of class.

IX. Grading
The course calls for four short papers, the first of which is a credit/no-credit paper, three one to two paragraph reading exercises, a quiz in class and participation. Assuming that everyone receives “credit” on the first paper, the three remaining graded five-page papers will be weighted as follows: 40% for your best effort. 25% for your next best effort and 15% for the one which is least successful of the three. The three reading exercises will count 10% and the quiz and participation each count 5% of your final grade.
X. Teaching Fellows
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 look at all the papers before grades are handed out and decide on what grades each paper should receive. If you are convinced an error has been made, first talk with the teaching fellow 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 will have its own LATTE Site that will mirror the Web Site of the course taught this summer at Harvard by Professor Teuber of the Philosophy Dept. here:

   Introduction to Philosophy (Harvard University)
   http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~phil54/

XII. Office Hours
I will hold office hours on Thursdays from 3:30 until 4:30 and by appointment. If you wish to leave messages for me, send me an email either at teuber@g.harvard.edu or teuber@brandeis.edu. The Teaching Fellows will also hold office hours and be reachable by email. Their hours will be announced a week or so into the semester.
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!

Ahh...