

PHL4001 Syllabus

Point Loma Nazarene University

**Contemporary Voices in Philosophy, Ethics and Language**

PHL 4001(3) and PHL 4090(1)

SPRING 2026

MW 1:15-2:55 Smee 305 Wesleyan Conference Room

Instructors: Heather K. Ross and Robert J. Thompson

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Office Hours: by appointment

**PLNU MISSION:**

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The goal of this class is to explore issues related to philosophical, theological and ethical discourse, with an emphasis on the limitations of language about God, the world, and ourselves. The class will be centered around 20th and 21st century philosophers who are themselves exploring the role of linguistic systems and meaning formation. We will engage with significant texts and figures that question some fundamental assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition. Our hope is that we will acquire a basic understanding of the views held by many of the more important philosophers in the contemporary period, and that we will be able to reflect on some of the most significant topics within philosophical and theological discourse, like ontology, immanence/transcendence, one's ethical obligation to the neighbor, gender performance, hospitality, hermeneutics, realism, truth, corporate responsibility, and so on.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

1. Students will engage in the disciplined practices of asking questions about God, the world, and of themselves, including questions for which there may be no easy answers. (Learning, Growing)
2. Students will differentiate among interrelated movements or figures in the history of philosophy. (Learning)
3. Students will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of human reasoning or experience to provide adequate accounts of significant issues that relate to our human condition, the world, ethics and Christian life. (Learning, Growing, Serving)

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To study 20th and 21st century themes out of the context of western philosophy and to critically reflect upon those trajectories of thought that arise out of and respond to the philosophical work of the Western philosophical tradition as a whole.
2. To examine the philosophical impact of *temporality*, understood with a gaze toward the future.
3. To examine the philosophical significance of *language* to metaphysical and epistemological engagement.
4. To study historically significant figures in the history of philosophy in order to enrich our engagement with the discourse within western philosophy.
5. To reconsider the term ‘philosophy’ in light of these thinkers.
6. To read some really good but difficult texts that question some ‘fundamental’ assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition.
7. To acquire a basic understanding of the views held by many of the more important philosophers in the contemporary period, as well as the primary philosophical movements, and major themes that make up the intellectual climate of that period.
9. To critically engage the philosophers of the contemporary period and evaluate their views and the impact of their views on contemporary thought and culture.
10. To study and critically evaluate the relationship between discourse, theology and human thought.
11. To wait in hopeful anticipation for that *impossible possibility*...

### **TEXTBOOKS:**

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (C.K. Ogden trans.) ISBN-13: 978-0486404455 or ISBN-10: 0486404455
2. Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time* (Stambaugh trans) ISBN-10: 1438432762 or ISBN-13: 978-1438432762
3. Heidegger, Martin, *Basic Writings* ISBN -978-0060-637637
- 4.. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (G.E.M. Anscombe trans.), ISBN-10: 1405159286 or ISBN-13: 978-1405159289

5. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *On Certainty*, (G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans.) ISBN: 0-06-131686-5

6.. Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity* ISBN-10: 0820702455

### **PROCEDURE/REQUIREMENTS:**

The format of the class will be seminar style. It will be team-taught by Rob Thompson and Heather Ross. Both of us will be present each day for the class discussion unless one of us has lost her or his voice. There will be class presentations by students, small and large writing assignments and two exams--one written and one oral. In order to take the class you must register for both PHL 4001 (3 units) and PHL 4090 (1 unit).

1. We will be reading from some of the most significant **texts** in the history of western thought. You must be reading the edition of these texts indicated above. It is vitally important that you become acquainted with the material in order that you get a feel for not simply what the writer says, but how they make you think. We want you to be thoughtful and critical of what each of the thinkers writes, as well as of what we say in class. A significant portion of your grade will be based upon the amount of reading you do. You will be asked to give a verbal report each day on your **reading** progress (scale of 0-10). For example, an 8.5 means that you read carefully and thought about carefully 85% of the assigned reading for that day.

2. Regular and punctual **attendance** is required for the full benefit of this class. If you are late, it is your responsibility to see one of us after class in order that your attendance may be recorded. Any three tardies will be recorded as one absence. Dialogue tends to spawn new ideas and creativity, so discussion will also be extremely important. Therefore, *each* student will be expected to enter into class discussion. The extent to which this occurs, along with attendance will be considered in your final grade. *You cannot pass the class* if you miss more than three weeks of class (six sessions). See the catalogue.

3. Since careful engagement with the text is essential for a productive seminar discussion, and since writing is a helpful means of engagement with new and/or complex ideas, we will begin each seminar session with a **daily writing** assignment. You will be given a prompt from the text and asked to free write off that prompt each day. You will then share your journal entry for the day with a classmate or our choice who will read through your entry and provide substantive feedback that is both supportive and critically engaging to the responses you have raised. You will be asked to keep these entries in a journal dedicated to the daily writing assignment (so not your regular notebook for the class) and we will collect it at random to assess and provide any feedback. It is critical that you bring your journal for the daily writing assignment with you every day we meet.

4. There will be one **paper proposal/bibliographic assignment**--the topic will be due initially on Library Day (3/18 by 1:15 via Canvas) and the final proposal/bibliographic assignment will

be due (3/23 by midnight) after you have been to the library. The purpose of the Library Day is to familiarize you with our library's database holdings in philosophy -specifically journal articles -and standard methods of philosophical research. We will be spending one class session in the library to help you prepare for the bibliographic assignment (March 18th--meet outside Ryan Library). For this assignment, you must provide three bibliographic references -complete with abstracts -to full text journal articles, including the database in which you found each article. The articles themselves should be related to your research proposal figure for the final term paper (see section 4 below). In other words, the bibliographic assignment should be related to this paper and specifically to the figure you will be focusing on from the latter half of the semester (neither Wittgenstein nor Heidegger). If it turns out that no abstract is provided by the database, you must provide your own brief summary. No more than a paragraph is required in this case. You will also need to present a final paper proposal, complete with a thesis statement and paragraph explaining your project, to us as a part of this assignment. Note: While important, secondary source research should never be used in lieu of careful engagement with primary sources. Careful scrutiny of the primary text(s) is always the first step in serious philosophical research.

5. The **final paper** is due Friday, May 1st, by midnight (3,750 words). The paper will be a summative project. It will be your responsibility to come up with a paper topic. It will make use of the research and reading you have done all semester. You will need to choose either Ludwig Wittgenstein or Martin Heidegger (or both) as a focus for your paper. In addition, you must choose another figure on which to focus from the material we will cover after the mid-term. This second figure must be integral to your project and will be the object of study for your bibliographic assignment mentioned above (section 3). In partial preparation for your final paper, you will make use of the research accomplished with your **library/bibliographical work assignment**. You will need to present a first-draft thesis statement/paper proposal to us (March 18th; see above). The final proposal will be due March 23rd, along with the Bibliographic Assignment, and must include an explicit thesis statement. You will be required to work on at least two drafts of your papers throughout the end of the semester. The first draft must be complete and will be due at class time on April 8th in hard copy and will be given to your peer reviewer. Your peer reviewer will return your draft to you with written comments by April 15th at class time. The peer reviewer's comments must be substantive and helpful for making a robust revision. Both the initial complete draft and peer reviewer comments will be considered in the final evaluation of papers and must be submitted in hard copy in our box by May 1st. Your final draft is also due May 1st by midnight as a Canvas submission. The papers are formal and will need to include formal citation (any manual of style is acceptable). Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in either zero credit for the assignment(s) and minimally a full grade reduction for the class or failure of the course (this is up to our discretion). Both will result in a letter to the Provost to be placed in your academic record.

6. Throughout the term each of you will do one in-class **presentation**. Please provide around a 150-200 word general introduction to the work to be covered for that day. This should be in your own words. If it is the first day discussing a figure, there should be general philosophical introduction to the figure covered during that session. You should make general reference to the reading for the day. Let us know what to expect from your presentation. It may include cultural analyses elucidating the time period surrounding the figure/work. The presentation should mainly be an outline of the text for the day. The person presenting should have in mind teaching the material and facilitating discussion at a seminar level and for the time allotted for the material. Students must provide an outline and bibliography in that week's discussion board as well as a physical copy for each person in the class. You should reference 4-5 significant portions of the text to be covered in class. You must provide a detailed list of quotations and bibliographic citation/reference for each member of the class via the DB (be discerning in your use of sources). Please also include a picture that has not been used by prior presenters. We expect you to be lively and engaged with the work you are presenting. If you are interested, we will be interested. We expect you to be(come) generally familiar with the figure's work. **You must have the same edition of the material as the class as a whole** (see ISBNs listed above). (NB: the goal is both to move through the salient elements of the reading for the day and to engage in critical discussion on the reading, so the presentations should reflect an effort to accomplish both elements.

7. There will be **two exams**. The mid-term will be written (essay and matching) and the final will be a combination of matching and group oral examination. The oral portion will include an extended group oral dialogue preceded by a matching portion. The first exam will be the length of the class period (March 4th). The second exam will be approximately 2 1/2 hours (the final exam period). The final exam is Friday, May 8th at 1:30-4:00.

The **grades** are based on all of these mentioned assignments. All outside assignments are due at the beginning of class. We will not accept late work. We will give no make-up exams unless you have an excused absence AND have notified either of us in advance. All make-up exams must be taken within one week of the exam. Do not expect to be able to make-up the exam unless one of us has written or spoken this to you explicitly.

**Point Distribution:**

Reading	10%
Daily Writing	4%
Bibliographic Assignment	4%
Presentation	14%
Written Mid-term	17%

Initial Paper Proposal	1%
Final Paper	17%
Oral and Matching Final	18%
Discussion Boards	15%
TOTAL	100%

100-94% A    79-77% C+    63-60% D-

93-90% A-    76-74% C    59-0% F

89-87% B+    73-70% C-

86-84% B    69-67% D+

83-80% B-    66-64% D

#### Discrimination and Harassment:

Discrimination or harassment related to race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual identity or orientation, differences in ability, religious choice, or any other type of behavior that dehumanizes human beings or dismisses difference, is not conducive to a good learning environment and is harmful to human vitality and healthy community. These behaviors will not be tolerated. We encourage all students to be open to any honest, respectful, and tactful discussion of issues that might arise in the context of our learning.

#### Inclusive Language:

The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of all people. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women and gender-diverse individuals, we urge students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. Thus, terms like “man” or “mankind” or the pronoun “he,” should not be used to refer to all humans. Instead “people,” “humanity,” “humans,” and “he, she or they” better acknowledge individuals as full persons.

#### Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be

equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at [www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination](http://www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination).

### Land, Labor and Life Acknowledgement

As students and scholars at PLNU, we acknowledge our presence on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the [Kumeyaay Diegueño Indian Tribe](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

. May we be good guests to the people, the stories, the wisdom, the fruits of the land and dwell with one another with peace.

### PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited. Further, if you plan to record any of the classroom discussion, you must receive explicit permission from the professor.

### State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online

course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

### Late Assignments and Incompletes

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in to Canvas when they are due. Any excused late assignment must be completed within one week of the original due date and must be approved via email by me. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

### PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

### PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

### PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course.

Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

#### PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy:

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

Note: The information below must be included under the "PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy" Section if you are teaching an Online or Hybrid course.

#### Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact the [Office of Spiritual Development](#)

#### Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination:

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at [pointloma.edu/Title-IX](http://pointloma.edu/Title-IX). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at [counselingservices@pointloma.edu](mailto:counselingservices@pointloma.edu) or find a list of campus pastors at [pointloma.edu/Title-IX](http://pointloma.edu/Title-IX).

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at [www.pointloma.edu/bias](http://www.pointloma.edu/bias)

## Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- [Appointment Calendar](#)
- [Links to an external site.](#)
- 
- [Website](#)
- Email: [writingcenter@pointloma.edu](mailto:writingcenter@pointloma.edu)

## Use of Technology

Please do not use laptops in class unless you have been given an exception via email.

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible) to complete exams online.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

## Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In [class name], all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been

intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include [list topics]. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of [subject/major], and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

### Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In [class name], we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include [list topics]. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of [subject/major], and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

### Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due—including assignments posted in Canvas. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

### Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

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### Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) is prohibited in this course for any aspect of your work, including idea generation, drafting, editing, or final submissions. This course is designed to assess your independent critical thinking, writing, and research skills without the assistance of AI technologies. Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity.

If you find you have violated the policy above, please see below for ways to alert me to your usage. Your usage of these “tools,” while harmful for your philosophical education and outside the bounds of any assignment given in this class, will be considered in calculating your grade and will result in a 50-100% reduction for each violation, depending on the degree of severity.

[MLA Style Center: Citing Generative AI](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

[APA Style: How to Cite ChatGPT](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

[Chicago Manual of Style: Citing Content Developed or Generated by AI](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

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Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.