

PHIL214 Philosophy in the Schools (PHITS) Practicum

Spring 2025

Instructor & Community Partner Information

Oberlin College:

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King 120B

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Oberlin Elementary School (OES), 210 N. Park St.:

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Molly Angney, 8th Grade Language Arts Teacher: mangney@oberlinschools.net

Course Attributes

Arts & Humanities ARHU, FC, CBL, Education Studies Integrative Concentration

Prerequisites

Acceptance of application, and one course in philosophy or permission of instructor.

Course Description

This course gives students a community-engaged way to develop their philosophical understanding and skills, by teaching philosophy in the Oberlin Schools. There are three parts to the course: (1) Philosophical and pedagogical preparation for working in the schools; (2)

teaching experience and feedback; and, (3) reflection on the role of philosophy, and our role as philosophers, in the broader community.

Class Times & Locations

MW 2:30 - 4:20 pm, King 237

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one of the following:

Monday 12:19-12:52pm, LMS

Wednesday 1:25-2:05pm, OES

Wednesday 1:25-2:05pm, OES

Friday 11:13am-11:46am, LMS*

* Note: these are the times for most weeks but there are a few exceptions — see full schedule below.

Learning Outcomes

1. An understanding of ways to facilitate philosophy discussion in a K-12 classroom.
2. Experience working in a diverse public school.
3. Skills and experience in planning a philosophy discussion for K-12 students.
4. Skills and experience in providing teaching feedback and support.
5. Skills and experience in reading and discussing philosophical texts.
6. Skills and experience in writing philosophically.
7. An awareness of what children have to teach us about philosophy.
8. An opportunity to reflect on the value and role of philosophy in the community.

Expectations

CBL courses come with extra responsibilities. In this course, you will be accountable to all of the following parties:

1. Each other / your teaching partners
2. The professor
3. The PHITS teaching assistant
4. The staff at either OES or LMS.

In order to take this course, you must be able to do the following:

1. Come to class on time every M and W 2:30pm-4:20pm (King 237).
2. If you need to miss a class, talk to the instructor.

3. Sign up with a partner to lead one seminar discussion.
4. Join in class discussion.
5. Commit to weekly school visits.
6. Arrive at the school at least 10 minutes before the beginning of the class with ID and appropriate dress.
7. Keep up with the seminar readings.
8. Submit 8 PCs, and do so on time.
9. Submit the final paper, and do so on time.
10. Share equally, in your teaching groups, the work of lesson planning.
11. Add your lesson plans to the group Google doc.
12. Provide your teaching partners with constructive feedback.
13. Reflect on your own strengths and challenges as a teacher.
14. Submit assessment and self-reflection forms on Blackboard.
15. Whenever you need help or have a question, talk to the instructor.

Policies

An absence from class must be excused by the instructor.

Two unexcused absences from class are permitted over the course of the semester. More than two unexcused absences will result in the loss of the total credit for attendance and participation.

An absence will be excused for a personal or medical emergency, or for the sake of religious observance, as long as the instructor is informed in a prompt manner.

For the course assignments (see below), late work will not be accepted except with the agreement of the instructor.

Detailed instructions for all assignments will be given in class and on Blackboard.

In accordance with college policy, extensions cannot be granted for the final paper. If you need more time, you must request an Incomplete from AARC: <https://www.oberlin.edu/aarc/academic-policies-procedures/incompletes>.

The Oberlin Honor Code applies to all work submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of this course (<http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/>).

The use of generative AI applications (e.g., ChatGPT) for writing assignments is prohibited.

If you require accommodations in this course, you must contact the Office for Disability and Access, Wilder 112, (440) 775-5588, disability.resources@oberlin.edu. Once you have done this, you must talk to the instructor.

Course Texts

All readings for the course are available on Blackboard.

All readings listed on the schedule below are required.

Assignments

late work will not be accepted except with the agreement of the instructor

Type		Weight
Leading seminar discussion with partner		12% (letter grade)
MW class attendance & participation		8% (letter grade)
8 Teaching Observation / Self-Reflection Forms (Teaching feedback)	Due: Before in-class teaching discussion (usually Monday after each school visit) Submit on Blackboard	10% (credit)
8 short (max. 500-word) writing pieces - 'Philosophical Connections' (PCs)	Due: one week after school visit Submit on Blackboard	28% best 6 (letter grade)
8 group lesson plans	Due: Before the school visit being planned Share Google Doc	12% (credit)
Paper (max. 2000 words)	Saturday, May 17 by 2pm	30% (letter grade)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Readings are listed by the author's last name in parentheses, next to the relevant topic, and on the day that we will discuss them in class.

Topics for the school visits are given in parentheses with the relevant headers. **Note that the school visit topics are one week behind the campus seminar topics.**

Full citations for all course readings are listed at the end of the syllabus. Copy and paste citations, as needed, in your writing assignments.

Week of 02/03

On campus

(M) Introduction;

(W) Discuss the *Philosophy for Children* movement (Pritchard)

Week of 02/10

On campus/school visits

(M) Meet community partners: Visit to LMS 3:30-4:20pm; learn about lesson planning (**come to class as usual at 2:30pm**)

(W) Meet community partners: Visit to OES 2:30-3:20pm (**leave campus 2:20pm**); learn about lesson planning

Week of 02/17

On campus

(M) Discuss *Reality* (Chalmers)

(W) Lesson Planning

School Visits (Introductions)

Schools closed on Monday

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES (both 5th grade teaching groups)

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS

(F) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

Week of 02/24

On campus

(M) Discuss *Right & Wrong* (Rosenthal)

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Reality)

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS

Week of 03/03:

On campus

(M) Discuss **Identity** (Chisholm, Pojman); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Right & Wrong)

Same days/times as last week

Week of 03/10:

On campus

(M) Discuss **Beauty** (Hume, Paris); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning - **at the art museum**

School Visits (Identity)

Same days/times as last week

Week of 03/17:

On campus

(M) Discuss readings on **Meaning of Life** (Hare, Taylor); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Beauty)

(M) 12:12-12:52pm 7th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(F) 11:16am -12:52pm 7th and 8th grades, LMS

Week of 03/24 SPRING BREAK

Week of 03/31:

On campus

(M) Discuss readings on **Justice** (Blum, Arvan); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Meaning of Life)

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS

Week of 04/07:

On campus

(M) Discuss **Environmental Ethics** (Clark); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Justice)

Same days/times as last week

Week of 04/14:

On campus

(M) Discuss **Friendship** (Nehamas); teaching feedback

(W) Lesson planning

School Visits (Environmental Ethics)

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

Schools closed on Friday 04/18

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS

Week of 04/21:

On campus

(MW) Teaching feedback; **Philosophy Magazine**

School Visits (Friendship or Environmental Ethics)

Schools closed on Monday 04/21

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES (Friendship)

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS (Environmental Ethics)

Week of 04/28:

On campus

(MW) Teaching feedback; **Philosophy Magazine**

School Visits (Friendship or Philosophy Magazine)

(M) 12:19-12:52pm 8th grade, LMS (Philosophy Magazine)

(M) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES (Philosophy Magazine)

(W) 1:25-2:05pm 5th grade, OES (Philosophy Magazine)

(F) 11:13-11:46am 7th grade, LMS (Friendship)

Week of 05/05 (classes end F 05/09):

On campus

(MW) **Philosophy Magazine**; wrap up

School Visits (Philosophy Magazine)
Same days/times as last week

Assignments

Leading Class Discussion

Sign up with a partner to lead the discussion in one of the Monday seminar classes.

At the beginning of class, give a two-minute summary of the main thesis and argument in the reading.

Take questions for clarification or elaboration, with the goal of ensuring a shared and accurate understanding of the reading.

Once this understanding has been reached, prompt and direct further discussion with a series of critical questions.

Make these questions specific and focused (i.e., not just, 'what does everyone think of the argument?' but rather 'is the author's assumption that x a reasonable one?' or 'do you think that the author's conclusion follows from claims y and z?').

Your questions can also involve relating the author's view to specific real-world or fictional scenarios.

'Philosophical Connections' (PCs) - Short Writing Pieces

8 in total; 6 best count for final grade.

After each school visit, you have one week to submit the related PC.

(For example, if you visit the school to discuss the topic of Reality on Monday 02/24, you have until the end of the day on Monday 03/03 to submit your PC on this topic.)

1 page, or max. 500 words (no minimum).

Submit as a Pdf file on Blackboard.

If you are unsure about when to submit any of your PCs, check with the instructor.

In your PCs, you will reflect on connections between (i) an assigned seminar reading on a certain topic, and (ii) the school students' discussion of the same topic.

- Did the school students illuminate the reading for you in some way?
- Did the school students offer a way to critically respond to the reading?
- Were there some interesting parallels between the school students' discussion and the reading?
- Did the school students approach the topic in a different way from the author of the reading?

These questions are only meant to guide your reflections. You do not have to answer all of them in the same PC.

Given that this assignment is only one page (max. 500 words), you will have to pick just one or two points of connection to discuss. Focus and clarity is key.

Sample PCs are on Blackboard.

Further instructions will be given in class and on Blackboard.

Full citations for all course readings are listed at the end of the syllabus. Copy and paste as needed.

Sign the Honor Pledge.

Teaching Observation/Reflection Forms

Due: Before the class in which feedback for a particular week of school visits will be discussed (see schedule above, usually Monday after school visits).

Fill in the feedback form — either the paper copy available from the instructor or the electronic copy on Blackboard. You can do this in the form of notes and you can keep it brief.

If you use the paper form, submit a photo on Blackboard.

Note that the forms will be used as a starting point for a class discussion with your teaching groups.

Lesson Plans

Due: Before the school visit being planned.

Most lesson planning will occur in class. If necessary, revisions and additions to lesson plans can be made outside of class.

Lesson planning occurs in small teaching groups. You will work with the same teaching group for the whole semester.

It is important that you share the work equally in your groups.

Each group will have a Google doc for writing up their lesson plans. All members of a group, as well as the instructor, must have editing access to the doc.

Sample lesson plans are on Blackboard. See also <https://www.plato-philosophy.org/philosophy-toolkit/>

Paper

Due: Saturday, May 17 by 2pm

2000 words max.

Submit on Blackboard as a Pdf file.

Choose one of your PCs to expand. Instructions on how to do this will be given in class and on Blackboard.

Full citations for all course readings are listed at the end of the syllabus. Copy and paste as needed.

Sign the Honor Pledge.

Additional Resources

Overviews of the IB program at OES and LMS:

<https://www.oberlinschools.net/ib/pyp>

<https://www.oberlinschools.net/ib/myp>

Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization (PLATO):

<https://www.plato-philosophy.org/what-is-plato/>

Sample lesson plans:

<https://www.plato-philosophy.org/philosophy-toolkit/>

Adeyemi Stenbridge, *Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom: An Equity Framework for Pedagogy*, New York: Routledge, 2020.

Bibliography for Pritchard's 'Philosophy for Children' <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/children/>

Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children: <https://www.pdcnet.org/thinking/Thinking:-The-Journal-of-Philosophy-for-Children>

Bibliography

Marcus Arvan, 'Justice as Fairness in a Broken World', *Philosophy and Public Issues* 4.2 (2014): 1-31.

Lawrence Blum, 'Reflections on *Brown Vs. Board of Education* and School Integration Today', *Harvard Review of Philosophy* 26 (2019): 37-57.

David J. Chalmers, 'The Matrix as Metaphysics' in Christopher Grau, ed., *Philosophers Explore the Matrix*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 132-176.

Roderick M. Chisholm, 'Identity through Possible Worlds: Some Questions', *Noûs* 1.1 (1967): 1-8.

Britta Clark, 'Neutrality, Nature, and Intergenerational Justice', *Environmental Politics* 30 (2020): 307-325.

Richard Hare, 'Nothing Matters' in David Benatar, ed., *Life, Death, and Meaning*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, pp. 43-49.

David Hume, 'Of the Standard of Taste', in Steven M. Cahn and Aaron Meskin, ed., *Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 103-112.

Alexander Nehamas, 'The Good of Friendship', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 110 (2010): 267–294.

Louis P. Pojman, 'The Problem of Personal Identity' in Pojman, ed., *Philosophy: The Pursuit of Wisdom*, Third Edition, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001, pp. 199-216.

Michael Pritchard, 'Philosophy for Children' in Edward N. Zalta, ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2022, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/children/>.

Chelsea Rosenthal, 'Why Desperate Times (But Only Desperate Times) Call for Consequentialism', in Mark Timmons, ed., *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics* 8 (2018): 211-235.

Richard Taylor, 'The Meaning of Life' in David Benatar, ed., *Life, Death, and Meaning*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, pp. 21-30.