

## UWG Philosophy Program

Class Information	Contact Information for Dr. Lane
PHIL 4385: <b>Special Topics: Truth and Reality</b> Instructor: <b>Dr. Robert Lane</b> Fall Semester 2019 TR 11am–12:15pm Prerequisites: PHIL 2010 or permission of instructor Classroom: Pafford 112 All online content available through CourseDen/D2L Dr. Lane's email: <i>rlane@westga.edu</i> *	<b>Office: TLC 2247</b> <i>Office Hours:</i> Tuesday: 8:45–9:15am; 12:30–1:45pm; Wednesday: 9:30am–2pm; Thursday: 8:45–9:15am; 12:30–1:45pm; <i>and also by appointment</i> Dr. Lane's office telephone: (678) 839-4745 English/Philosophy telephone: (678) 839-4848

*\*All email communication must be conducted from your official UWG email account. Students are obligated to check their UWG email accounts on a regular basis and to ensure that their mailboxes do not become full. I am not allowed to disclose your grades over email.*

This is a **Discipline Specific Writing (DSW)** course, fulfilling one of two DSW requirements for the College of Arts and Humanities. All DSW courses require that students write a minimum of 4,000 words across multiple assignments, not including revisions. There will be multiple written assignments that will be evaluated for subject matter, grammar, punctuation, spelling, accuracy, and organization, among other things.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will examine recent philosophical approaches to truth and reality and the related concepts of post-truth and social construction. We will begin by examining the meaning of “real” and related terms, as well as various theories of truth and different ways of thinking about its connection with reality. We will then consider the phenomenon of post-truth, including how it is illustrated in contemporary political rhetoric, its origins in the philosophical tradition of postmodernism, and its relationship to other threats to truth. After that, we will turn to Susan Haack's innocent realism and examine how it is related to her views on truth and fiction. After considering some challenges to realism, we will address the topic of social construction in order to understand how it is related to reality and to consider whether, and if so in what ways, race and gender are social constructions. *May be taken to fulfill Philosophy Major Area requirement A.*

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** By the end of the semester, each student will be able to use precisely defined philosophical terminology in order to explain and critically discuss the following subjects (assessment will be by way of multiple short essays and one long term paper): post-truth; intellectual integrity; Susan Haack's realism; challenges to realism; the reality of race; and the reality of gender. These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students better to critically analyze and explain a philosophical issue in written communications.

**METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:** The typical class session will consist of about **50% lecture and 50% class discussion**. Lectures are intended to elucidate and provide supplementary information relevant to the reading assignments and to form the basis for **a vigorous class discussion**. Reading assignments will be made on a regular basis. In order to benefit fully from lectures and to participate meaningfully in class discussion, **it is a must** that you do the reading when it is assigned.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** Lee McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (2018). All other assigned readings will be made available in CourseDen.

**TIME REQUIREMENTS:** UWG grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of (approximately) one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately sixteen weeks. For this three credit-hour course, students are required to spend two and a half hours (150 minutes) in class each week and to conduct **at least an additional 6 hours of work relevant to this course outside of class each week**. You should expect to work more hours than this outside of class during periods when you are preparing for an exam or a working on a major writing assignment.

**CONVERSION TO HONORS CREDIT:** Any student wishing to receive honors credit for this course must get the approval of the professor and complete all the necessary paperwork during **the first week of class**. I will not sign honors conversion forms after that point.

## METHODS OF ASSESSING LEARNING IN THIS CLASS

- **Short papers (96 pts = 6 papers worth 16 points each).** Length: 1200–1500 words per paper. The short paper due on **Thursday September 5** is mandatory for all students. There are six other short papers shown on the course schedule: each student must select **five** of those six papers to complete. Each short paper must be submitted to the correct Assignment Folder in CourseDen. I will provide a detailed Grading Rubric for these papers.
- **Term paper (60 pts; about 30% of your total course grade).** Length: 2,500-3,000 words. You must submit a draft by no later than **Thursday November 15**. You may give me the draft at any earlier date. Your draft must be at least 2,000 words long. Both the draft and the final version must be submitted to the correct Assignment Folders in CourseDen. I will provide a detailed Grading Rubric for this paper.
- **Class participation (48 pts; about 25% of your total course grade).** You will be assigned a score of 0-4 for class participation for each of the 28 class meetings between (inclusive) Tuesday August 20 and Tuesday December 3:

### Does Not Meet Expectations

0 – Student is absent

1 – Student is rude, disruptive, distracting; does not have the assigned reading; falls asleep

2 – Student is physically present but mentally elsewhere; doesn't contribute to conversation; has the assigned reading but is not taking notes; playing with cell phone

### Meets Minimum Expectations

3 – Student is present and has a copy of the assigned reading; is taking notes and paying attention; contributes at least once to class discussion

### Exceeds Expectations

4 – Student arrives prepared for class; participates multiple times in class discussion; is responsive to participation and engaged in contributions and comments made by others; contributions are thoughtful and provoke additional comments from others; does not dominate conversation; listens carefully and responds thoughtfully to comments made by others.

At the end of the semester, I will drop your four lowest scores, total the remaining 24 (maximum: 96), and then halve that score (maximum: 48 points).

<b>GRADING SCALE:</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>204 – 183 pts</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>141 – 122 pts</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>182 – 163 pts</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>121 – 0 pts</b>
	<b>C</b>	<b>162 – 142 pts</b>		

## MISSED DEADLINES / EXTRA CREDIT / WORK FROM OTHER COURSES:

- If you are unable to complete one of the writing assignments by posted deadline, you must let me know about this as far in advance of the deadline as possible. I may grant you an extended deadline if one of the following conditions applies: (a) Your inability to meet the deadline was due to illness or injury serious enough to require professional medical care and that prevented you from contacting me before the test; or (b) your inability to meet the deadline was due to other extenuating circumstances beyond your control. I will determine on a case-by-case basis what constitutes "extenuating circumstances beyond your control." You may be required to provide documentation of your circumstances.
- **Extra-credit work will not be given under any circumstances.**
- **Work completed for other courses will not be accepted in this course.**

## ATTENDANCE

- **You may miss four class meetings with no effect on your grade.**
- **Beginning with your fifth absence, you will lose ten points (out of 204; about 5% of your total course grade) from your final average for every class meeting you miss.** This is in addition to receiving zero points for class participation for that day. This policy takes effect on the day of our second class meeting (Tuesday August 20). I will make exceptions for absences necessitated by UWG-sponsored events or by other circumstances that were absolutely outside your control. However, I will make these exceptions **only if ALL of your absences can be accounted for in one of these ways** (e.g., if you miss five classes and you have documented, acceptable reasons for missing only four classes, then your fifth absence will still count against you). Documentation will be required in all cases in which I make an exception to this attendance policy.
- **Students who miss 10 or more class meetings will not earn a passing grade in this course.** In this case the reason for your absences is irrelevant. If you are unable to attend class for a prolonged period of time due to medical reasons, a family emergency, or any other reason, you should withdraw from the course; if the withdrawal date has passed, you should apply for a hardship withdrawal.

## LATE ARRIVAL, EARLY DEPARTURE

- An early departure or late arrival may be counted as an absence, depending on the circumstances. I will decide in each case whether an early departure or a late arrival counts as an absence. If you know before class that you will not be able to stay for the entire class session, please inform me of this before class and sit as close to the door as possible, so as to cause as small a distraction as possible when you leave.

## From the UWG Undergraduate Catalog

- “Instruction begins the first day of class. In face-to-face courses, if students fail to attend the first day and have not contacted the instructor to explain their absence, they may be dropped during the Drop/Add Period to make room for other students.”
- “Class attendance policies are determined by each instructor for his or her courses and may be found in the syllabus. Since course policies differ, students are responsible for understanding attendance requirements for each course. Failure to comply with those requirements may significantly affect grades.”
- **“Students are expected to attend each class meeting.** Students absent from class while officially representing the University or observing religious holidays should generally not be penalized in the calculation of final grades, as long as they provide advance notice and expeditiously make arrangements to complete any missed work.
- “University-sponsored activities include but are not limited to the following: intercollegiate athletic competitions; musical/theatrical/art performances or exhibitions associated with a degree program; debate competitions; and research conferences. Activities not considered to be university-sponsored include participation in clubs, even if they are affiliated with UWG, or events associated with social organizations such as fraternities or sororities.
- “Regardless of the reason for the absence, each student is responsible for the material covered in class, for completing any assignments, and for making specific arrangements with the instructor for any work missed. The degree to which missed work can be made up will depend upon the nature of the work and its intended purpose. Make-up is at the discretion of the instructor.
- “Any student who must be absent for more than one week of class should notify the Patient Advocates in Health Services, telephone 678-839-6452. The student should also notify the instructor or department.”

## EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

- **Electronic devices—smartphones, laptops and tablets—may be used in class only for viewing electronic versions of readings.**
- **You should take notes by hand rather than with an electronic device.** Typing notes with a laptop encourages you to simply transcribe what’s being said without thinking about it, while taking notes by hand encourages you to think about what you’re writing.
- **Do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely necessary that you do so.** Leaving the classroom while class is in session is both disrespectful and distracting. So when you come to class, be prepared to remain in the classroom for the full duration of the class period.
- **Do not study material from other classes while this class is in session.** While you are in this class, I expect your attention to be focused on it rather than on your other courses.
- **Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others.** Such behavior includes—but is not limited to—arriving late for class, allowing cell phones to ring, and speaking disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students. Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the attendance policy stated above.

## TITLE IX

- UWG is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual misconduct—including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking—is also prohibited at UWG. Our school encourages anyone experiencing sexual misconduct to talk to someone about what happened, so they can get the support they need and our school can respond appropriately. If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, want more information about filing a report, or have questions about school policies and procedures, please contact our Title IX Coordinator, Claudia Lyerly (678-839-5344; [clyerly@westga.edu](mailto:clyerly@westga.edu)). UWG is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, and therefore it cannot guarantee the confidentiality of a report, but it will consider a request for confidentiality and respect it to the extent possible. As a teacher, **I am also required by our school to report incidents of sexual misconduct and thus cannot guarantee confidentiality.** I must provide our Title IX coordinator with relevant details such as the names of those involved in the incident.

For the Americans with Disabilities Act, UWG Email, Credit Hour, and UWG Honor Code policies as well as information on Academic Tutoring, Student Services, and Technical Requirements, Privacy Policy, and Accessibility Statements, please see <http://www.westga.edu/UWGSyllabusPolicies/>

**COURSE SCHEDULE:** THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE IS **TENTATIVE** AND MAY CHANGE AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with test dates, due dates, and reading assignments.

August	Topic	Reading Due	Papers / Exams
R 8-15	Introduction to the class	--	
T 8-20	Basic concepts: reality, etc.	--	
R 8-22	Basic concepts: theories of truth	--	
T 8-27	What is Post-Truth?	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.1	
R 8-29	Science Denial	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.2	

Sept.	Topic	Reading Due	Papers / Exams
T 9-3	Cognitive Bias	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.3	
R 9-5	Decline of Traditional Media; Rise of Social Media & Fake News	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.4 & 5	<b>Short Paper 1 (mandatory): Post-Truth chs.1-2</b>
T 9-10	Did Postmodernism Give Rise to Post-Truth?	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.6	
R 9-12	Fighting Post-Truth	McIntyre, <i>Post-Truth</i> ch.7	
T 9-17	Intellectual Integrity: Frankfurt on bullshit	Frankfurt, "On Bullshit"; Graham, " <a href="#">What Trump Did in Osaka was Worse Than Lying</a> "	
R 9-19	Intellectual Integrity: Haack on what it is and why it matters	Haack, "Confessions of an Old-Fashioned Prig" (pp.7–15 only)	<b>Short Paper: 2: Post-Truth chs.6-7</b>
T 9-24	Haack on truth	Haack, "The Unity of Truth and the Plurality of Truths" (all)	
R 9-26	Haack's innocent realism	Haack, "The World According to Innocent Realism" (pp.1–18)	

Oct.	Topic	Reading Due	Papers / Exams
T 10-1	Haack's innocent realism applied to natural science, social science, and law	Haack, "The World According to Innocent Realism" (pp.18–31)	<b>Short Paper 3: Intellectual Integrity</b>
R 10-3	<b>Fall break: class does not meet</b>		
T 10-8	Haack on the real vs. the fictional	Haack, "The Real, the Fictional and the Fake" (pp.1–7)	
W 10-9	<b>Last day to withdraw with a grade of "W"</b>		
R 10-10	Haack on a problem about fictional characters	Haack, "The Real, the Fictional and the Fake" (pp.7–9)	
T 10-15	Challenges to realism: language use	Khlentzos, " <a href="#">Challenges to Metaphysical Realism</a> " introduction and secs.1, 3.1 & 4.1	
R 10-17	Challenges to realism: brains in vats	Khlentzos, " <a href="#">Challenges to Metaphysical Realism</a> " secs 3.3 & 4.3	<b>Short Paper 4: Haack's realism</b>
T 10-22	Challenges to realism: competing conceptual schemes	Khlentzos, " <a href="#">Challenges to Metaphysical Realism</a> " secs. 3.4 & 4.4	
R 10-24	Is race real?: Overview of the debate	James, " <a href="#">Race</a> ," Introduction, sec.1, (especially) sec.2, & sec.3	
T 10-29	Is race real?: Skepticism	Zach, "Race and Contemporary Anthropology" (all)	<b>Short Paper 5: Challenges to realism</b>
R 10-31	Is race real?: Realism	Andreasen, "Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?" (all)	

Nov.	Topic	Reading Due	Papers / Exams
T 11-5	Is race real?: Race as Social Identity	Appiah, "How to Decide If Races Exist" (all)	
R 11-7	Is gender real?: Essentialism	Witt, "What is Gender Essentialism?" pp.11–18	
T 11-12	Is gender real?: Essentialism	Witt, "What is Gender Essentialism?" pp.18–24	<b>Short Paper 6: Race</b>
R 11-14	Are gender and race real?: Structuralism	Haslanger, "Gender & Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" pp.31–37	
T 11-19	Are gender and race real?: Structuralism	Haslanger, "Gender & Race..." pp.37–45	<b>TERM PAPER DRAFT</b>
R 11-21	Are gender and race real?: Structuralism	Haslanger, "Gender & Race..." pp.45–52	
T 11-26	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK: THIS CLASS DOES NOT MEET</b>		
R 11-28	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK: THIS CLASS DOES NOT MEET</b>		

Dec.	Topic	Reading Due	Papers / Exams
T 12-3	Beyond Post-Truth	Haack, "Post-Post-Truth: Are We There Yet?"	<b>Short Paper 7: Gender</b>
R 12-5	Review/catch-up; course evaluations	--	<b>TERM PAPER</b>
T 12-10	<b>11am–1pm: Final Class Meeting</b>		

