



Walters State Community College Course Syllabus

Course Information

Course Number and Name: PHIL 2640 Science and the Modern World

Section ID: 81330.202380

Semester and Year: Fall 2023

Credit Hours: 3

Start Date: August 21, 2023

End Date: December 08, 2023

Course Format: DVC - Desktop Video Course

Catalog Course Description: A study of the nature of science and the relationship between science and other areas of life including religion, ethics, politics.

General Education Course Designation: General Education Course

Meeting Details: M; 06:00PM - 09:05PM; DVC

Course Drop Deadline: October 27, 2023

Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Thomas Provenzola

Role: Instructor / Adjunct Faculty

Office Location: Main / Synchronous Online Course

Office Hours: I check our course emails each day. Please contact me via internal email through eLearn course page to arrange an office visit. I'm available to meet via Zoom or MS Teams at any point prior or subsequent to our virtual class meeting. Additionally, I'm typically available to meet during normal working hours, or at any other prearranged time.

Office Phone: Please contact Dr. Provenzola via internal email

Email: tprovenzola@elearn.ws.edu / Thomas.Provenzola@ws.edu

Supervisor Name: Dean Rob Pratt

Supervisor Phone: 423-585-6952

Secretary Name: Debbie Wilson

Secretary Phone: 423-798-7957

Required Textbook(s) and Materials

Science, Evolution, and Religion

Subtitle: A Debate about Atheism and Theism

ISBN: 9780199379378

Authors: Michael Peterson & Michael Ruse

Publisher: Oxford

Publication Date: 2017

Edition: First

Philosophy of Science

Subtitle: A New Introduction

ISBN: 978-0-19-536619-8

Authors: Gillian Barker & Philip Kitcher

Publisher: Oxford

Publication Date: 2014

Edition: First

The Case Against Perfection

ISBN: 978-0-674-03638-3

Authors: Michael J. Sandel

Publisher: Harvard University Press

Publication Date: 2007

Edition: First Paperback Edition, 2009

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

- 1. Define the concepts of explanation, confirmation, and falsifiability.
- 2. Explain the demarcation problem in science.
- 3. Explain scientific realism and its problems.
- 4. Describe several theories critical of modern science.
- 5. Explain the ethical theories of utilitarianism and deontology and show how they apply to cases of scientific research and technology.

- 6. Explain how science influences public policy and vice versa.

Instructional Approach and Methods

1. The course is lecture based
2. Evaluation happens informally through class discussion and formally through graded assignments consisting of written papers (one argumentative critical response paper, and one short research paper), ten reflective note assignments, and one exam on the material in the Sandel text.

Assessment, Evaluation and Testing Procedures

Argument Analysis Paper (1 @ 100 points) = 100

Critical Response Paper (1 @ 100 points) = 100

Reflection Notes (10 @ 20 points each) = 200

Quizzes (14 @ 15 points each) = 210

Exam on the Sandel text = 100

Total = 710 points

Grading Scale

A	639-710
B	569-638
C	497-568
D	426-496
F	0-425

Assignments

Argument Analysis Paper:

1. Write a paper of no less than 1800 words on one of the topics listed below.

2. Each topic consists of a single philosophical argument. Your paper must explain and evaluate that argument. To do that, you must do everything on this checklist:

- Present the argument in the standard form, with numbered premises and conclusion (just as the argument appears below).
- Explain any special terms that appear in the argument.
- Explain the argument itself so that anyone can understand why someone might think it plausible.
- Refer to any relevant course texts to support what you say about any of our author's views.
- State whether the argument is logically valid. (Hint: it is.)
- For each of the premises of the argument, say explicitly whether it is true or false, and give cogent reasons for what you say.
- Consider something that someone who disagrees with you about the argument would say by way of objection to what you have said and reply to it.

1. This checklist is meant to be an exhaustive guide to everything you need to do to do well on this assignment. You need not go beyond it by (e.g.) constructing your own standard form arguments, comparing the argument to others, describing the importance of the argument, or describing your own views on the topic (except insofar as they come out in your discussion of the truth or falsity of the premises). All of those sorts of moves have their place in philosophical writing, but the point of this assignment is for you to focus your gaze on a very narrow sort of task: just explaining and evaluating one philosophical argument. If you can master this task, you can build on that success to other sorts of writing and thinking, both in philosophy and elsewhere.

2. Below the list of topics, you can find three other sections that should help you. The first is called General Information about Writing Philosophy has other advice and information about the assignment. Please read it. The second is the rubric I will use to grade your paper, where you can see not only what is on the rubric but what is most important (by being worth the most points). Finally, at the end of the syllabus, I have provided a sample paper, written by Dr. Baddorf, that gives an example of the sort of thing I am asking you to do. If, after consulting these, you have questions about the assignment, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. And remember, when you get stuck, to get help: from me, from your fellow classmates, and from the College's Writing Center.

3. Paper Topics (choose one):

1. Topic A: Moral Naturalism

- Consider the following argument:

- 1. If everything that exists is natural, then nothing is objectively morally wrong.
- 2. Everything that exists is natural.
- 3. Therefore, nothing is objectively morally wrong.

2. Topic B: Science and Morality

- Consider the following argument:
- 1. If we can measure human happiness, then we can use this to discover what is morally best.
- 2. We can measure human happiness.
- 3. Therefore, we can use our measurements of human happiness to discover what is morally best.

3. Topic C: Fine-Tuning

- Consider the following argument:
- 1. If a multiverse hypothesis is plausible, then the fine-tuning argument doesn't give us good reason to believe in God.
- 2. A multiverse hypothesis is plausible.
- 3. Therefore, the fine-tuning argument doesn't give us good reason to believe in God.

4. Topic D: Evolution, Theism, and Chance

- Consider the following argument:
- 1. If evolution is undirected (as that term is used by biologists), then evolution and theism are incompatible.
- 2. Evolution is undirected (as that term is used by biologists).
- 3. Therefore, evolution and theism are incompatible.

5. Topic E: Evolution, Theism, and Suffering

- Consider the following argument:
- 1. If evolutionary processes involve great suffering, then evolution and theism are incompatible.
- 2. Evolutionary processes involve great suffering.
- 3. Therefore, evolution and theism are incompatible.

6. Topic F: Science and Free Will

- Consider the following argument:
- 1. If scientists can predict a decision before a person is aware of making it, then that action wasn't consciously chosen.
- 2. If an action wasn't consciously chosen, then that action wasn't free.

- 3. Therefore, if scientists can predict a decision before a person is aware of making it, then that action wasn't free.
7. Here, I'll say a bit about the audience you should imagine yourself writing for when you write your paper. Then I'll list some details about what your paper should be like and conclude with some final bits of advice.
 8. Your paper should be oriented towards an audience that is *unfamiliar with your topic*. This means that you will need to explain what you are talking about (perhaps with a brief note about why your audience might care about it), and that you will need to define any technical terms you use.
 9. Most philosophical writing is argumentative, in the sense that you are trying to convince your audience of the truth of a thesis. Our paper for this course isn't just about this, in that you also have to explain the argument you are critically discussing. But you are also evaluating this argument, which means you will be making one or more arguments of your own.
 10. For this paper, your arguments should be directed at an imaginary audience who doesn't necessarily share your religious, political, scientific, or philosophical outlook. You are not merely stating your view and explaining why you hold it; you are presenting reasons for someone else to take up your view. So, for example, a good paper couldn't be summarized like this: "I believe God exists because I am a Christian." A good paper would instead say something like "I am arguing that the fact that some pointless suffering exists should not make us believe that God doesn't exist, because God might have good reason to allow such suffering."
 11. So, your paper should be argumentative. It should also be a philosophy paper. This means that you should strive to give the paper the virtues that philosophers tend to care about: precision, clarity, and a strong argument, as well as the general virtues of academic writing (such as giving credit to those who have helped you).
 12. So, as you follow the instructions above, remember that you are writing an argumentative philosophy paper designed for an audience that isn't familiar with the details of your topic and which might not agree with your views.
- 1800 words
 - Double-spaced
 - 12-point font
 - 1-inch margins
 - No cover pages
 - Saved as a Word .doc
 - Proper citations (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian)
 - Must be turned in both *online* (uploaded through eLearn) and on or before the due date.
 - Papers are due in the eLearn Dropbox on the day the paper is due.

- Papers not submitted on time in Dropbox must first be emailed to the instructor to show proof of completion prior to receiving any approval for late acceptance.
 - A deduction of one full letter grade each day the assignment is late.
1. The paper must be argumentative within an argument analysis framework. Do not plagiarize or copy other sources without giving credit to the original author. Intentional and unintentional cases of plagiarism are treated the same: **A zero on the paper and a possible F in the class.**
 2. Some final words of advice:

You can find some **good advice on how to write philosophy** in the Content tab of the Course Page. It is never too early to start to think about how to write your paper well. Note that some of the advice in the links (about classroom policies and such) may not be relevant for us, but almost everything else is very helpful.

Use rhetorical questions sparingly, if at all. Often rhetorical questions make philosophy even more difficult to read, and you should make your paper as simple to read as possible. If you include a question, either answer it or explain why it is important to note but isn't being answered. And don't ever use two rhetorical questions back-to-back—it is just too likely that you will lose your reader.

You are welcome and encouraged to **reach out to me for help!** I cannot always spend as much time helping as I would like, but I am happy to talk to you about your paper and answer any questions you may have. Make use of me! And make use of the College's Writing Center as well.

Papers will be graded as follows:

Quality of writing = 30%

1. Grammar and style are polished = 27 – 30
2. Grammar and style are good = 24 – 26.5
3. Grammar and style are acceptable, but some problems may make reading difficult = 21 – 23.5
4. Grammar and style obstruct reading = 1 – 20.5

Meets minimum requirements = 20%

1. Paper is not an argument analysis essay = 0
2. Paper is not on a relevant topic = 0
3. Paper is either under or over the required word count = 0

Quality and clarity of argument = 50%

1. Excellent: Paper is logically organized, and makes this organization clear to the reader; paper accurately presents the argument (in standard form) and states that it is valid; paper very clearly explains any special terms in the argument; paper very clearly explains the argument; paper says whether or not premise 1 is true, and supports this with excellent reasons; paper says whether or not premise 2 is true, and supports this with excellent reasons; paper considers what might be said by someone who disagrees with the paper's assessment of the argument, and makes a cogent reply to it = 45 – 50
 2. Good: a 'good' paper will meet most, or all, of the above criteria, but either fail completely to do so, or to do so at a level whose quality is below that found in an 'excellent' paper = 40 – 44.5
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1. Acceptable: An 'acceptable' paper *might* meet most, or all of the above criteria, but will probably meet some number of the criteria that won't count as 'most'. Even so, in the case that it does meet most or all of the criteria, it will be done at a level whose quality is well below that found in an 'excellent' paper, and notably below that of a 'good' paper = 35 – 39.5
 2. In the case that the paper is seriously deficient in most of the above criteria = 1 – 34.5

Critical Response Paper

1. Students will write one short critical response paper on a topic of his/her choosing, but a topic that falls within the domain of 'values in science.' So, for example, a student might choose from one of the following topics:
 - The ethics of (non-human) animal testing (for pharmaceutical drugs, etc.)
 - The ethics of human cloning
 - The ethics of genetic enhancement in humans
 - The ethics of gender reassignment in humans
 - The ethics of invitro fertilization in humans
 - Etc.

The paper must include at least five or six separate scholarly sources. Two of those sources should reflect opposing points of view, one *for* your position and one *against* your position. Additionally, your

paper should give proper reference (not quotations) to those sources through generous Turabian (Chicago) style documentation. ***Be sure to include a complete bibliography at the bottom of your paper.***

1. Directions/guidelines for the paper are identical to those for the Argument Analysis Paper *except* that this paper is a research paper, and the topic is not on science and religion. Be sure to consult the guidelines for Critical Response Papers posted to the Content tab of our eLearn course page.

Exam

There will be one exam on the Sandel text. The exam will cover the *entire* book, including the epilogue.

Reflection Notes (RNs)

Each Reflective Note (RN) you submit will earn a grade of up to 20 possible points. A substantive RN will be two or three healthy paragraphs (no less than 300 substantive words) in which you raise *either* (1) a ***question about*** or (2) ***an objection to*** something that happens in a particular assigned reading. To ensure that I understand exactly how your question or objection engages the material you're writing about, you'll need to provide some context by briefly summarizing the part of the reading your question or objection concerns. Sincere effort will usually suffice for a substantive RN. However, an RN that's too short or inaccurate or unclear will earn an inferior grade of and will work against an enhanced final grade. ***(See the Guidelines for two sample substantive RNs.)***

Here are a few important rules about RNs:

- RNs can be submitted only in the class eLearn Dropbox.
- Each RN will be about one of the readings assigned within a given unit on the Course Schedule and indicated by ***(RN)***.
- Each RN will cover a different reading assignment.
- You must indicate your word count at the bottom of the RN.
- The count of 300 words is a minimal count. You are encouraged to write more. Our objective here is to practice the art of philosophy through substantive interaction. We are suggesting that you cannot adequately produce a substantive question or objection, and offer an informed response, in less than 300 words.

Academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism), or failure to turn in an assignment will result in a '0'.

There is no extra credit for the course. You should do your best to stay current with the readings and come to class prepared for discussion; those who participate in class will be looked upon favorably when it comes to deciding borderline grades, though there is no penalty for not participating. Moreover, if you stay current on the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the readings, it's a good bet that adequate performance on the assignments will follow.

Class Participation

Class attendance is mandatory, and class participation is expected. The class will meet 6:00PM-9:05PM Monday evenings via MS Teams.

Virtual attendance is required. Since we meet only once a week for approximately three hours (Mondays 6:00PM–9:05PM), you may miss one (1) class period without penalty. After one full absence, 20 points of your accumulative score will be deducted for each day of absence. If you have an extended illness or some other documentable crisis that will require you to miss more than four classes, please contact me for accommodations.

Course and Class Policies/Procedures

Disrespect (for your classmates or for your instructor) is unacceptable.

If you wish to discuss the grade you receive for *any* particular assignment, you'll need to contact me via our course page email. We can meet virtually through Zoom or MS Teams.

You must be reachable via your eLearn email. I cannot stress this enough. You will be notified of any changes that occur to the course over the semester (if any changes are in order) via email. Moreover, if I need to contact you individually for any course-related reason, this will be the preferred way of reaching you. Be sure not neglect to check your eLearn email. Your course email should be checked at least once at the start of your weekly unit and periodically throughout the week. **If a student wishes to email the instructor, s/he can expect a reply within 48 hours *except on weekends and holidays*.**

Think of this class as an exercise in impartial, dispassionate, free and rational thinking about some contentious moral issues. For the purposes of this course (though I think this is good practice in general), I'll ask you to set aside your own likes and dislikes, your feelings, and your upbringing and instead concentrate on giving *reasons* for the positions you defend and against the ones you criticize.

And the reasons you offer should be, as far as is possible, ones that any sane, rational, clear-thinking person could be expected to accept—or at any rate, recognize even if they don't agree with the conclusions you draw from those reasons. Your grade is not contingent on what any of us *believe* about any particular issue. What matters are the *reasons* you provide for what you believe or think—the philosophical reasons offered through good arguments and reasonable evidence. That's what I'll evaluate—not your particular *position*, but the reasons and arguments *you offer for* a given position.

There's reciprocity here. I'll expect you to evaluate the *reasons* given for a particular position, whether they are from a particular philosopher, your classmates, or your instructor. This approach assumes you'll do your best to respect those with whom you're engaging—that you'll keep your cool and try your best to see things from the side of your opponent. We embrace in advance the good faith attitude that each of us will assume (as we ought) that the instructor, philosophers, and classmates with whom we interact are doing their best to be rational, sane, and clear-thinking people.

Additional Course Requirements/Details/Information

All assigned readings indicated under a respective unit heading are due for that unit. The same is true for any assignments posted to a respective unit. Most readings can be found in our textbooks. Readings with an asterisk (*) after them are available on the course eLearn site. Readings marked as “recommended” are just that: optional readings that give helpful perspectives (and which can be discussed in the forums, in assignments, or in relevant test essay questions), but which are not required.

Since the development of the course is somewhat organic, a work in progress, it's possible from time to time that you may be asked to view a lecture or video. Again, you can find required or recommended links on eLearn as well.

Note also that this schedule is subject to change. All the same, no major changes will be required apart from significant advance warning or a very good reason.

UNIT 1: Science and Values (A Test Case)

Michael Sandel, *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*

Barker & Kitcher, *Philosophy of Science: A New Introduction*

Week 1: Science and Values: The Ethics of Enhancement (Aug.21-27)

Navigate the Course Page

Preview: Course Syllabus and Course Schedule - Assignments Document

Read: Sandel, Chapter 1: The Ethics of Enhancement, 1-24

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 1, 1-11

Due: Reflection Note #1

Week 2: Science and Values: Bionic Athletes (Aug.28-Sept.3)

Read, Sandel, Chapter 2: Bionic Athletes, 25-44

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 2, 12-29

Due: Quiz #1: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 2, 12-29

Due: Reflection Note #2

Week 3: Science and Values: Designer Children & Designer Parents Sept.4-10)

Read, Sandel, Chapter 3: Designer Children & Designer Parents, 45-62

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 2, 29-47

Due: Quiz #2: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 2, 29-47

Due: Reflection Note #3

Week 4: Science and Values: The Old Eugenics and the New (Sept.11-17)

Read, Sandel, Chapter 4: The Old Eugenics and the New, 63-83

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 3, 50-66

Due: Quiz #3: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 3, 50-66

Due: Reflection Note #4

Week 5: Science and Values: Mastery and Gift (Sept.18-24)

Read, Sandel, Chapter 5: Mastery and Gift, 85-100

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 3, 66-77

Due: Quiz #4: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 3, 66-77

Due: Reflection Note #5

Week 6: Science, History, and Society (Sept.25-Oct.1)

Due: Reflection Note #6

Due: Exam on Sandel Text

UNIT 2: Science and Religion

Week 7: Cosmic Origins (Oct.2-8)

Michael Peterson and Michael Ruse, *Science, Evolution, and Religion: A Debate about Atheism and Theism*

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 2, Science, 25-51

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 4, 78-105

Due: Quiz #5: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 2, Science, 25-51

Week 8: Fall Break: No Class (October 9-15)

Week 9: Origins of Life (Oct.16-22)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 3, Cosmic Origins, 53-77

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 5, 106-117

Due: Quiz #6: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 5, 106-117

Due: Quiz #7: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 3, Cosmic Origins, 53-77

Due: Critical Response Paper

Week 10: Darwin and Design (Oct.23-29)

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 5, 117-134

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 4, Origins of Life, 79-102

Due: Quiz #8: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 5, 117-134

Due: Reflection Note #7: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 4, Origins of Life, 79-102

Week 11: Evolutionary Directionality (Oct.30-Nov.5)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 5, Darwin and Design, 103-123

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 6, 136-150

Due: Quiz #9: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 5, Darwin and Design, 103-123

Due: Quiz #10: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 6, 136-150

Week 12: Mind and Rationality (Nov.6-12)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 6, Evolutionary Directionality, 125-149 **(Optional)**

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 7, Mind and Rationality, 151-172

Due: Quiz #11: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 7, Mind and Rationality, 151-172

Due: Reflection Note #8, Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 7, Mind and Rationality, 151-172

Week 13: Morality (Nov.13-19)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 8, Morality, 173-194

Read: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 6, 150-162

Supplemental Handout on Moral Naturalism on eLearn Course Page (*)

Due: Quiz #12: Barker & Kitcher, Chapter 6, 150-162

Due: Reflection #9

Week 14: Evil and Suffering (Nov.20-26)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 9, Evil and Suffering, 195-215

Due: Quiz #13: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 9, Evil and Suffering, 195-215

Due: Argument Analysis Paper

Week 15: Meaning and Purpose (Nov.27-Dec.3)

Read Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 10, Meaning and Purpose, 217-238

Due: Quiz #14: Peterson & Ruse, Chapter 10, Meaning and Purpose, 217-238

Due: Reflection #10

There is no final exam for this class.

Academic Honesty

Faculty expect all students to refrain from acts of academic misconduct including but not limited to:

1. Plagiarism - refers to using another person's ideas or writing without giving proper credit to the original source. Indulging in this type of conduct will subject the student to disciplinary sanctions, which may be imposed through the regular institutional procedures of Walters State Community College as outlined in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism will result in a grade of "0" for the paper/exam/presentation. Student Conduct and Disciplinary Sanctions contained in the

college Catalog/Student Handbook apply (see policy 04:18:02 Disciplinary Sanctions).

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a. Using cut/paste tool from original document with no references given.
 - b. Copying another student's work and submitting it as one's own.
 - c. Forging or otherwise altering signatures.
 - d. Giving or falsifying academic documents or materials.
2. Cheating - construed as attempting to deceive or mislead which includes, but is not limited to the following:
- a. Utilizing old tests, projects, notes or written papers.
 - b. Providing unauthorized information to a fellow student about exam content.
 - c. Receiving unauthorized aid from any source with quizzes, examinations, or other assignments.
 - d. Seeking information in an unacceptable manner during/preceding an exam or other assigned work (cheat sheet, verbal exchange, looking at another person's paper or electronic device, utilizing headphones, using textbook when the test/quiz is not an open book test/quiz, using textbook test bank etc.).
 - e. Consulting with a classmate or others when taking a computerized test.
 - f. Disregarding other specific policies and procedures outlined for a particular class.
 - g. Utilizing unapproved technology/electronic equipment during testing (i.e.: mobile devices such as cell phones, smart devices, or tablets, etc.).
 - h. Using the same Internet Protocol network address (IP address) as another student for testing without approval from the course faculty.
3. The use of any generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Bard, or any other pre-trained language model (commonly referred to as "chatbot"), must be cited for any assignment where it has been used and may not be used unless specifically allowed by your instructor. Please see your instructor or the course policies within the syllabus if you have questions.

Student Resources

TUTORING SERVICES

Students in need of tutoring assistance are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Tutoring located as follows:

- Morristown Campus - Student Services Building Room L107 - (423) 585-6920

- Niswonger Campus - GRNV 226 - (423) 798-7982
- Sevierville Campus - MMH Room 210 - (865) 286-2787
- Claiborne Campus - Room 123A - (423) 851-4761

Specific tutoring assistance in mathematics and writing is available in-person and online as follows:

- Morristown Campus - English Learning Lab - HUM 120 - (423) 585-6970

[Walters State English Learning Lab \(opens in new window\)](https://www.waltersstate.edu/academics/humanities/writing-lab)
[ws.edu/academics/humanities/writing-lab](https://www.waltersstate.edu/academics/humanities/writing-lab)

- Morristown Campus - Mathematics Lab - MBSS 222 - (423) 585-6872

[Walters State Mathematics Learning Lab \(opens in new window\)](https://www.waltersstate.edu/academics/mathematics/learning-lab)
[ws.edu/academics/mathematics/learning-lab](https://www.waltersstate.edu/academics/mathematics/learning-lab)

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Students who need assistance with computing and technology issues should contact the IET Helpdesk by phone at Morristown: (423) 318-2742; Niswonger: (423) 798-8186; or Sevierville: (865) 286-2789 or on-line access.

[Walters State Helpdesk \(opens in new window\)](https://www.waltersstate.edu/helpdesk)
[helpdesk.ws.edu](https://www.waltersstate.edu/helpdesk)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SUPPORT SERVICES

Students with disabilities must register with Student Support Services each semester in the Student Services Building, Room U134 (phone (423) 585-6892) if they need any special facilities, services, or consideration.

[Walters State Student Support Services \(opens in new window\)](https://www.waltersstate.edu/student-services/disability/)
[ws.edu/student-services/disability/](https://www.waltersstate.edu/student-services/disability/)

SUICIDE PREVENTION STATEMENT

Walters State is committed to and cares about all students. Support services are available for any person at Walters State who is experiencing feelings of being overwhelmed, hopelessness, depression, thinking about dying by suicide, or is otherwise in need of assistance. For immediate help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by calling or texting 9-8-8 or the Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386. Veterans may also contact the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) or Text 838255.

Walters State has a relationship in place with the following community agencies to provide services (may include crisis referral services, prevention screenings, etc.):

- Cherokee Health Systems 423-586-5032
- Frontier Health 423-467-3600

College Policies

STUDENTS HANDBOOK AS OFFICIAL GOVERNING DOCUMENT

This class is governed by the policies and procedures stated in the current Walters State Community College Student Handbook. All students attending Walters State Community College, regardless of the time, location, or format of the class, must abide by the rules and regulations outlined in the current Walters State Catalog/Student Handbook and the current Walters State Timetable of Classes.

[Walters State Catalog \(opens in new window\)](#)
catalog.ws.edu/

[Walters State Timetable of Classes \(opens in new window\)](#)
ws.edu/admissions/registration/

PURPOSE, LIMITATIONS AND MODIFICATION OF SYLLABUS

This syllabus sets forth the expectations for the course content, work, and grading as well as expectations for student performance and conduct. The syllabus does not constitute a contract between the student and the instructor or the College. The information contained here is subject to change at any time. The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus at any time with written notification to the students. Though changes are possible, it is expected that the course will be conducted as described in this syllabus for the semester/year specified in the Course Information section of the syllabus. This syllabus is only valid for the semester/year specified and course requirements are not guaranteed for future semesters.

COURSE GROUND RULES

- Students must attend the first day of on-ground class or contact the instructor prior to the first class. Failure to do this may result in being dropped from the class. Excessive absences may substantially lower the course grade.
- Regular class attendance is a student's obligation for any course regardless of format. (See the Walters State Catalog/Student Handbook). If a student misses class, it is his or her responsibility to contact the instructor regarding missed assignments and/or activities and to be prepared for the next class assignment.
- Students enrolled in web courses must follow the course attendance policy defined for online attendance during the first week of class and throughout the term. Failure to do this may result

in being dropped from the class during week one OR may result in the accrual of absences which may negatively impact the student's grade in the course.

- Students who have not paid fees on time and/or are not correctly registered for this class and whose names do not appear on official class rolls generated by the Walters State student information system (MyWS) will not be allowed to remain in class or receive credit for this course.
- Electronic devices must not disrupt the instructional process or college-sponsored academic activity. Use of electronic devices is prohibited unless use of the device is relevant to the activity and use is sanctioned by the faculty member in charge. Electronic devices that are not relevant to the activity or sanctioned by the faculty member in charge should be set so that they will not produce an audible sound during classroom instruction or other college-sponsored academic activity.

FINANCIAL AID

Students receiving any type of financial aid or scholarship should contact the Financial Aid Office before making any changes to their schedule. Schedule changes without prior approval may result in loss of award for the current term and future terms.

All forms of student Financial Aid may be jeopardized or lost due to the lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress in one or multiple courses. Lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress may negatively impact a student's degree/certificate completion pace and further jeopardize Financial Aid eligibility.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES AND ACADEMIC CONTINUITY

For information related to the cancellation of classes due to inclement weather or other events, please check the Senators Emergency Text system or the college's Web site at:

[Walters State Homepage \(opens in new window\)](#)

ws.edu/home/

[Walters State Facebook page \(opens in new window\)](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/WaltersState/>

[Walters State Twitter page \(opens in new window\)](#)

<https://twitter.com/waltersstate>

or call the college's student information line, 1-800-225-4770, option 1; the Sevier County Campus, (865) 774-5800, option 7; the Niswonger Campus (423) 798-7940, option 7; or the Claiborne County Campus, 423-636-6200, option 7. Also, please monitor local TV and radio stations for further announcements.

When an event or disaster interrupts the scheduled operations of the college and the ability to proceed with the academic course activities as planned, the college and your instructor may alter the course plan outlined in the syllabus. Should an event occur, students should refer to their course e-Learn pages and/or class materials previously delivered to receive guidance from their instructor. Students should continue to monitor the official college channels of communication listed in the above paragraph. If you would like to sign up for the Senators Emergency Text system, please go to the following Web site:

[Senator Emergency Text System \(opens in new window\)](https://ws.edu/set/)
ws.edu/set/

Dual Enrollment students attending on a high school campus should refer to the high school inclement weather cancellations.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Brightspace (commonly known as eLearn or D2L) is the college's Learning Management System (LMS).

Brightspace is committed to accessibility by "deliver[ing] a learning experience that meets the needs of all people, regardless of age or ability." [Brightspace Accessibility Standard \(opens in new window\)](#)

Brightspace is also committed to guarding student data and privacy. [Brightspace Privacy Policy \(opens in new window\)](#)

Sample 'Acceptable' RNs, and Sample 'Excellent' Argument Analysis Paper

1. 'Question' RN:

One of Provenzola's main aims in this syllabus is to give us a clear sense of the questions and issues we'll explore in this course. Unfortunately, he sometimes slips into using unfamiliar terminology. One important place this happens is when Provenzola tries to describe the questions about God's existence that we'll be exploring. Here, he uses the expression 'intellectually justified': "is anyone ever *intellectually justified* in believing that God exists?" 'Intellectually justified' is not an "everyday" or "ordinary" expression: the typical person on the street probably won't know exactly what that means. Rather, this unfamiliar term seems to be one that's defined and used primarily within the field of Philosophy. So, my question: What does it mean for a belief in God to be intellectually justified?

2. 'Objection' RN:

According to Provenzola, the “main intellectual tool” we use to explore philosophical questions is what he calls the “power of *reason* or *rational insight*”. Provenzola distinguishes what he calls ‘reason’ or ‘rational insight’ from the “five senses” (vision, touch, taste, smell, hearing). Apparently, then, Provenzola thinks that we can gain knowledge and/or intellectually justified beliefs using something *other than* the five senses. I don’t buy this vaguely “spooky” idea. Instead, it seems to me that whatever knowledge we have comes *only* from the five senses. So, it looks like *either* Provenzola is wrong about the proper way to explore philosophical questions *or* Philosophy turns out to be a pretty dubious discipline. Either way, Provenzola seems to be wrong about Philosophy.

3. Argument Analysis:

The following paper was written to give you a sense of what an excellent paper responding to your assignment looks like. The only difference between it and your paper assignment is that it is written in response to a different philosophical argument, Topic X. Topic X is unavailable to you; I wanted to present an example about a subject you were not going to write about, largely to prevent you from accidentally imitating the example too closely. Note that there are occasional comments in square brackets ([])—this is not part of the sample paper but rather notes and advice for how to apply it to your own papers.

Topic X:

1. No claim is scientific unless it can be tested.
2. The claim that God made the earth less than 10,000 years ago cannot be tested.
3. Therefore, the claim that God made the earth less than 10,000 years ago is not scientific.

I understand that your papers probably will not in certain ways sound like this one. You are novices, and this is written by an expert, after all. So, I hope this paper isn't intimidating, but instead gives you a vision of what you can shoot for. Here, then, is the sample paper:

Argument Analysis: Topic X

By Dr. Matthew Baddorf

The topic gets less attention now, but one still sometimes hears disputes about young-earth creationism (sometimes called creation science) and whether it is really scientific.^[1] As it happens, disputes about what counts as scientific are a long standing topic in the philosophy of science; philosophers have tried to develop ways to tell whether something is real science (like chemistry) or pseudoscience (astrology is usually mentioned as an example). In this paper I will briefly evaluate one argument against young-earth creationism, an argument inspired by these philosophical discussions.^[2] [You don't need a stage-setting introduction to the argument you are discussing like this one, but you can include one if you think it will be helpful. Otherwise, feel free to jump write into your version of my next paragraph.]

Here is the argument I will discuss in standard form:

1. No claim is scientific unless it can be tested.
2. The claim that God made the earth less than 10,000 years ago cannot be tested.
3. Therefore, the claim that God made the earth less than 10,000 years ago is not scientific.

This argument is valid. [Two comments: first, this is all you need to say in order to meet the requirement that you state whether the argument is valid; second, note that you don't need to indent the first line after an argument in standard form—your next line can be part of the same paragraph if you want.] Since the argument is valid, the only way it can fail is if one of its two premises is false; so, I will soon discuss these premises.

First, though, I will paraphrase the argument to give you a sense for why we should take it seriously. The gist of what the argument is getting at is this: scientific theories are ways of describing the world around us, and they are successful when they successfully do that. It is hard to imagine what all that could involve if it didn't involve *testing* theories, trying to come up with ways of checking them to see if they are really true. And yet—according to this argument—the claim that God made the earth recently can't be tested in this way. We aren't told why, but maybe it is because we can't test the past (without a time machine, anyway), or maybe it is because the claim involves God (and you can't exactly run tests on God). [This paragraph fulfills the requirement to explain why the argument is plausible, and to explain any special terms; I judged that there weren't any special terms that required explanation.]

So, the argument really is plausible. But I'll argue that it fails: although (2) is true, (1) is false. [Note that terms like "(1)" and "(2)" are quick and clear ways of referring to the whole sentences from the argument being discussed. This is one of the advantages of writing arguments in standard form.]

Consider (1). It claims that all scientific claims can be tested. But there are claims that seem paradigmatically scientific—made by reputable scientists, discussed by other scientists in peer-reviewed scientific publications, and so forth—that can't be tested. Some of the more exotic modern examples involve string theory or multiverses. But there are also historical examples, such as Newton's claim that gravity was a force that acted at a distance (rather than something explainable by atoms hitting each other, as most scientists of his day thought); he could provide no experiment to decisively test this claim. [Ideally, it would be nice to have references to academic sources describing all of these examples. But the assignment doesn't call for this, so as long as you avoid plagiarism you don't need to provide sources to back up all your claims. Just try to give as much explanation or evidence as you can given the space and time constraints you have.] So (1) doesn't seem to be actually true.

At this point an objector might reply that I have misunderstood what it means to test a theory. It might be true (they could say) that you can't directly test something like whether gravity is a force. But it is part of an overall network—a web of claims—that can be tested. So, to take the Newton example: although Newton didn't have any way of directly running an experiment that could prove or disprove the idea that gravity was a force, his claim that gravity was a force was connected to all sorts of other claims he made about how and why gravity works. And some of those claims—like his equations describing the strength of gravity—can be tested. So, I haven't really shown that there are scientific claims that can't be tested, since they are linked to claims which can be tested. [This paragraph fulfills the requirement that I discuss what an objector might say in response to me. You can put this wherever makes the most sense; you don't have to wait until after you have discussed both premises.]

In reply, I would say that being *linked* to a testable claim is not the same as *being* a testable claim. I think the objector to my view here is probably confusing the notion of something's being testable with the notion of something being capable of having evidence for and against it. Suppose we had two claims, say, "that God loves me" and "that I own a fancy car". Someone might argue that these are linked, by arguing that anybody that if God really loves somebody than God will probably give them a fancy car. (I don't think they are linked in this way; I don't think that the fact that God loves me is cast in any doubt by the fact that I don't own a fancy car. But I think some atheists—and perhaps some health-and-wealth preachers—would say that these two claims are linked. I will pretend they are right.) Supposing all this is true, then my lack of a fancy car might be *evidence* that God doesn't love me. But this fact doesn't mean that we can *test* whether God loves me; God's love is still not something we can do tests to discover. [In this paragraph, I explain how I would reply to the objector; now I move from that to the section where I discuss the second premise.]

Assuming I am right thus far, then we can see why (2) is true. Recall that (2) says that the claim that God made the earth less than 10,000 years ago cannot be tested. Well, that is right; we have no way of coming up with an experiment to test what went on in the past—perhaps especially when the past is so remote. As my previous paragraph suggested, that doesn't mean we can't get evidence for or against the idea, and it might be reasonable or not reasonable to believe given all of evidence available. But it isn't testable.

Sometimes I am not so sure that my reply to the earlier objection is right; that is, sometimes I think it is true that everything in science is testable, even if not directly. (I don't have the space to go into why here, but plenty of smart people are attracted to the idea that everything in science is testable, and they could be right.) But even if I am wrong about that, this doesn't save the argument of Topic X. For if premise (1) is true, then premise (2) is false. For as I was just saying, we can get evidence for or against young-earth creationism. We can try to carbon date fossils, for example. And we can consider religious arguments for or against the idea that God would make the world this way. So if the objectors are right that testability can be indirect, then it seems like young-earth creationism can be tested indirectly as well as anything else. So even if part of my argument (my initial argument against premise (1)) is wrong, I am still right to think that the argument in Topic X doesn't work. [Note that you can talk just as openly as I have about how you are unsure of something; it doesn't have to make you sound weak. And sometimes, as here, it makes your overall argument stronger, because you can show how your overall argument is still good even if you are wrong about one piece. (And you can use "I" as often as you need too, as well.)]

So, at most, one of the two premises of this argument are true, and so it is not sound. Hence, this argument does not show that young earth creationism is not scientific. That does not mean that young earth creationism *is* scientific; maybe there is some other reason it isn't. Nor does it mean that the view that the earth is young is true, or might be true; those are separate claims, and I don't take any position on them in this paper. All I have argued is that argument X doesn't work; lack of testability doesn't make young earth creationism unscientific. [Conclusions are also not necessary, but you can include one if you think it helpful to your reader. I am including this one as an example of how good philosophy is usually careful, tentative, and precise in its conclusions.]

Reference:

Ruse, Michael. 1982. "Creation Science is Not Science." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 7 (40): 72-78

[1] Young earth creationism is the view that God made the earth more or less as it is today a relatively short time ago. This usually involves a bunch of other ideas as well, such as about Adam and Eve and

how to read the Bible. For the purposes of this paper, though, I'll just be focusing on young-earth creationism's claim about the age of the earth.

[\[2\]](#) In particular, I am drawing on ideas in Ruse (1982).