

PHIL4100 & HUMS4901 (0.5 credit)

Special Topic: Philosophy as a Way of Life Examined

Fall 2026

Professor: Annie Larivée
Seminar schedule: Weekly, Tuesdays from 2:35 to 5:25pm
Office hours: Tues. 1:00-2:00 & 5:30-6:00pm, or by appt.
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Course Outline

DESCRIPTION

Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL), a meta-philosophical movement originating in the work of historian of ancient philosophy Pierre Hadot (1922–2010), has become an influential way of rethinking the aims and methods of philosophy. Distinct from Public Philosophy, it offers an alternative to philosophy as a purely academic, professionalized activity, while remaining firmly anchored in the history of philosophy (esp. Greek and Roman). Different versions of the paradigm have been developed, and critical work has taken place from within.

Yet despite its growing influence inside and outside academia, PWL has rarely been examined critically from outside its own conceptual horizon. To prepare for this external assessment, the seminar will first examine competing versions of PWL, each engaging ancient philosophy differently: Hadot's spiritual exercises; Nussbaum's therapy of desire; Foucault's practice of care for the self; Sellars' art of living; Cooper's reasoned life; and Telo's strengthening of reason. We will identify points of convergence and divergence among these versions and consider their compatibility (or incompatibility) with academic philosophy, the criteria by which they might be assessed, and whether PWL (in one or multiple versions) can be coherently integrated into contemporary practice. Participants, including the instructor, will be invited to clarify their own philosophical commitments in light of these discussions.

MEETINGS STRUCTURE

Although we need to remain flexible, each weekly meeting is tentatively structured as follows:

- 2:35–3:05 (30 min): Synthesis and critical assessment of previous meeting
- 3:05–3:50 (45 min): Student-led discussion, Part 1
- 3:50–4:05 (15 min): Break
- 4:05–5:05 (60 min): Student-led discussion, Part 2
- 5:05–5:25 (20 min): Introduction to next theme/readings by AL

CALENDAR

Note: Readings and themes are provisional and will be confirmed at our first meeting.
All assigned texts will be available on Brightspace.
Optional readings and complete bibliographical references will also be available on Brightspace.

PART 1. Critical Exploration of the PWL Paradigm and its Historical Sources

Meeting	Date	Theme	Reading(s)
1	Sept. 15	Introduction	No advance reading
2	Sept. 22	Philosophy through spiritual exercises	P. Hadot: "My Books and My Research";

			"Spiritual Exercises"
3	Sept. 29	Choosing philosophy as a way of life: conversion and the role of discourse in practice	P. Hadot: "Philosophy and Philosophical Discourse."
4	Oct. 6	Philosophy as self-transformation and care for the self	Foucault: <i>The Hermeneutics of the Subject</i> , first week (6 January 1982, first and second hours).
5	Oct. 13	Philosophy as "therapy"	Nussbaum: <i>The Therapy of Desire</i> , Introduction and ch. 1, "Therapeutic Arguments"
6	Oct. 20	Ancient philosophy as a way of life or art of life?	Sellers: The Art of Living: Introduction & ch. 1; Larivée: "Philosophy as a Way of Life Examined: Clearing Up the Confusion between Philosophy as a 'Way of Life' and as an 'Art of Life'."
—	Oct. 27	No meeting	
7	Nov. 3	What does living a reasoned life require?	Cooper: <i>Pursuits of Wisdom</i> , ch. 1, "On Philosophy as a Way of Life"; Telo: "On the Role of Reason in Ancient Philosophical Practice"
8	Nov. 10	Was ancient philosophy really a way of life? Fiction and reality.	Larivée: "Philosophy as a Way of Life in Classical Antiquity" (forthcoming; draft provided) Plato: <i>Clitophon</i> ; Aristotle: <i>Protepticus</i>

PART 2. PWL and PAL Today: Possibilities and Challenges

Meeting	Date	Theme	Reading(s)
9	Nov. 17	Can ancient arts of living be reenacted today? The case of Stoicism	Holiday: <i>The Daily Stoic</i> , Introduction + Jan. 1–7; Inwood: "Stoicism, Then and Now"; Becker: <i>A New Stoicism</i> . "Part 1 The way things stand"
10	Nov. 24	Are transformative arts of living even possible? Ancient claims and contemporary psychology	Attie-Picker: "Does Skepticism Lead to Tranquility?"; Upton: "Meditation and the Cultivation of Virtue."
11	Dec. 1	Do we still need philosophy as "therapy"? When psychotherapy uses philosophy	Yalom: <i>The Gift of Therapy</i> , Introduction; <i>Existential Psychotherapy</i> , Introduction; Dickinson: "The Lineage of Positive Psychology and Cognitive Behavioral Modalities: How Stoicism Inspired Modern Psychotherapy"
12	Dec. 8	Is academic philosophy sick? The compatibility of PWL and PAL with professional philosophy	Kitcher: <i>What Is the Use of Philosophy?</i> ch. 1; Fischer: "How to Practice Philosophy as Therapy: Philosophical Therapy and Therapeutic Philosophy."

PERSONAL EXPERIMENT: READING ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AS A PRACTICE

Throughout the seminar, participants will conduct a personal experiment in engaging with an ancient philosophical text as a possible practice rather than as an object of academic study.

Beginning in the first week, each of us will choose one ancient text from the list below, and read a very short passage each day (a page, a paragraph, or even a few lines) considering whether and how it might inform or affect the way we think or live.

The purpose is not to achieve any particular result, but to acquire first-hand experience that we can draw on when assessing philosophy as practice in the art of living.

Choice of ancient texts:

Marcus Aurelius: *Meditations*

Epictetus: *Discourses*

Seneca: *Letters to Lucilius*

Epicurus: *Letters and Principal Doctrines*
Lucretius: *On the Nature of Things*
Sextus Empiricus: *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*
Xenophon: *Memorabilia*

You are strongly encouraged to obtain a paper copy of your chosen text for this experiment. You will be responsible for obtaining your own copy (new, used, or borrowed). An electronic version may be used temporarily while you obtain one. I will recommend specific translations/editions at our first meeting.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

Requirement	Frequency	Weight
Weekly Discussion Prep Sheet	11 ×	30% total (~2.73% each)
Leading a Discussion	1 ×	20%
Final Synthesis (5 min. presentation)	1 ×	15%
Final Seminar Written Report (2500-3000 words)	1 ×	35%

The specific expectations for each part of the evaluation will be explained in more detail at our first meeting.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This seminar is designed to help you:

- Become familiar with the PWL paradigm and learn to approach philosophy from the different perspective it offers;
- Develop a critical understanding of major contemporary interpretations of ancient philosophy as a way or art of life;
- Assess these interpretations in relation to the ancient evidence;
- Critically examine the possibility and desirability of practicing philosophy as a way or art of life today, including its relationship to psychology, psychotherapy, and professional philosophy;
- Cultivate and practice epistemic virtues conducive to collaborative inquiry, recognizing and developing your own capacity to contribute to a shared intellectual endeavour.

POLICY ON THE USE OF AI

AI tools can be useful for proofreading your own work or clarifying your own ideas. However, using AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, or other platforms) to generate content is prohibited.

The purpose of this course is not to assess what an AI system can produce, but to develop your own ability to think, interpret, and communicate ideas. Only through your own engagement with the materials will you benefit from the seminar. All submitted work must reflect your own thinking and your own interaction with the course materials.

Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct and reported to the Dean's Office.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2026-27)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. We no longer allow hard copies to be placed in the department's essay box.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* after the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the exam date or original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as '*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*' This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source.

Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of "F" for the course.

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the full meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Statement on AI:

As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described in the course outline with the instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Mental Health:

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>.

Academic Accommodation:

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (<https://carleton.ca/accessibility/accommodations/>). Examples of special arrangements include:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EIC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 9	Fall term begins.
Sept. 22	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 12	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for December examinations and two-term midterm examinations.
Nov. 27	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 11	Last day of fall term classes. <i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i> Last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 12-23	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	Winter term begins.
Jan. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for April examinations.
Mar. 25	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Mar. 26	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 9	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 10	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 11-23	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<https://carleton.ca/csas/support/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735