

# Lectures and Seminars: What to Expect

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## 1 Structure of Lectures

I will lecture for most of the available time, leaving some breaks for questions (roughly every 10-15 minutes).

### Ground rules for lectures

1. **ATTEND.** The lectures are where most of the course material is described in an accessible manner. If you miss them, you're missing out.
2. **ASK QUESTIONS.** Please ask questions of clarification as they occur (I don't want anyone to be left behind over a terminological issue that could be cleared up in two seconds). More substantive questions can be asked in the (regular) question breaks. Lectures also represent a good opportunity to practice your public speaking.
3. **RESPECT TIME-KEEPING.** Sometimes, in order to cover the material, I'll have to cut interesting discussion short. This isn't because your points are bad or uninteresting, but rather I need to get through the relevant material. Conversation can be continued in the back-up seminars (see below).

## 2 Structure of the Seminars

The seminars are intended as a more informal atmosphere in which to discuss material from the lectures. I may say a few words at the start of the seminar on some aspect of practising philosophy. After that I'll ask someone to kick off discussion on the seminar question and away we go.

### Ground Rules for Seminars

Again, it's good to specify what I expect from my students specifically for the seminars.

1. **ATTEND.** The obvious one. Philosophy is a collaborative, discursive discipline. This is where the magic happens. Don't miss out on it! That's the carrot. The stick (possibly also a carrot) you will be graded on the basis of attending and making a satisfactory contribution to the seminars (this includes how one interacts and facilitates the discussion of others, as well as one's own contribution).

2. **DO THE READING.** Within Philosophy, there's been a lot of insightful people thinking about difficult questions for over 2000 years. Make use of this resource. If you turn up without having done the reading you just won't get as much out of the seminar. A quick blaze through 30 minutes before the seminar, though not ideal, is over 9000 times better than not having done the reading. Further, it's best if you bring a copy of the text with you to the seminar—we'll want to refer to it in analysing arguments.
3. **DO THE ESSAYS.** This is an opportunity to get some feedback on your written work, essential if you want to perform well. Essays are due by the end of Reading Week and the end of term (both midnight on Sunday). The deadline is strict, if you are late I am not obliged to mark the essay. If you need more time ask for an extension at least a week before the deadline, but don't just submit it late.
4. **DON'T STRESS.** This is the opportunity to ask the questions you are worried might be a bit odd. Take it. You are not being judged; I want philosophical improvement, not carefully guarded statements. The seminar should be a relaxed place.
5. **CONTRIBUTE.** As I've said, these seminars represent a fantastic opportunity for you to *really* hone your philosophical skills. It's part of my job to ensure you get the most out of your degree course, and contributing to seminars is an essential part of this. If you're not contributing, I'll just call on you to say something (plus your contribution grade will suffer if you remain silent).
6. **DISAGREE.** If you make an argument, I'm going to challenge it, or ask others to do so. This isn't because you're wrong, it's because part of why we're here is to learn to respond to (constructive) criticism. If I question your reasoning, I want you to push back (I'll tell you bluntly if something *really* doesn't work).
7. **BE NICE.** Because of its discursive nature, debate can get quite heated. I expect a collaborative atmosphere and full respect to be shown for others at all times (e.g. don't interrupt others, don't scoff at controversial viewpoints, do say when you think someone has made a good point).
8. **ASK QUESTIONS.** I'm happy to discuss the material *via* email. A couple of pointers: 1. Short emails are likely to receive a faster response, if you've a few questions on loosely related topics, better to send multiple emails. 2. I'm busy, but will aim to respond to everything (I'll let you know if I've no more time). If you don't get a response within the week, feel free to send a prompt.
9. **ENJOY YOURSELVES.** The most important one. Philosophy, done right, is extremely enjoyable. This is a paradigmatic philosophical activity; open discussion with others. Relish it.

### 3 Administrative details

Aside from attending, you'll need to do the following:

- Submit one essay by the end of reading week (deadline: Midnight Sunday) to my e-mail.

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- Essay length guidelines:
  - First years: 1000-1500 words.
  - Second years: Approximately 2000 words.
  - Third year part-time: Approximately 2000 words.
  - Third year full-time: 2000-2500 words
  - Fourth year part-time: 2000-3000 words.