

## Philosophy Application Project

So far, our philosophical discussions have been confined to Blackboard and Zoom meetings. This assignment is meant to be a fun opportunity for you to (i) demonstrate your understanding of a philosophical or ethical concept, issue, argument, or position (“philosophical topic” for short) that you learned about in this course and (ii) make something that has the potential to bring philosophy or ethics to people outside of the classroom. There are several ways to complete this project, and I am open to suggestions (see the final option below).

### **Option 1 (video):** Create a TikTok or YouTube video

Make a TikTok video (1 minute minimum) explaining a philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.<sup>1</sup> Some ideas:

- Act out a conversation between two characters to illustrate the concept of an epistemic bubble and/or echo chamber
- Act out a conversation between two or more characters to illustrate a moral disagreement and then explain how moral realism, moral error theory, and/or moral relativism would view the disagreement (e.g., explain the argument from relativity for moral error theory)
- Use props or actors to recreate a thought experiment, such as the trolley case, the organ transplant case, the life extending killing case, the brain-in-a-jar case, the brain transplant case, etc., and then explain the philosophical or ethical significance of it
- Use preexisting video clips (or act out your own scene) to illustrate an ethical theory, such as classical utilitarianism, Kantianism, or moral particularism
- Use preexisting video clips or images to briefly summarize a TV show, movie, or work of fiction and then explain how it is connected to an issue in ethics or philosophy
- Use preexisting video clips or images to illustrate issues of consent that are related to the materials from Tom Dougherty and then use Dougherty’s materials to clarify those issues

To complete this option, you should do the following:

1. Familiarize yourself with TikTok. (There are many tutorials on YouTube.)
2. Prepare a short “script” (this could be a few bullet points outlining your video) and a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how your video will illustrate the philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
3. Make the video and submit it to TikTok or YouTube. (If don’t want anyone else to see your video, you can set it to “friends only” and add me as friend, or you can export it from TikTok and upload it to YouTube as “unlisted.”<sup>2</sup>)
4. Upload your “script”/explanation and submit your video link through Blackboard.

If you don’t want to use TikTok, you should do the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Here are some examples from philosophy professors: <https://dailynous.com/2022/03/15/philosophy-tiktok/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.istaunch.com/save-tiktok-video-without-posting/>

1. Prepare a short “script” (this could be a few bullet points outlining your video) and a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how your video will illustrate the philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
2. Make the video and upload it to YouTube. (If don’t want anyone else to see your video, you can set it to “unlisted.”)
3. Upload your “script”/explanation and submit your video link through Blackboard.

**Option 2 (audio / writing):** Create an interview, short podcast episode, or song

The **first way** to complete this option is to record an interview (at least 5 minutes long) in which you engage someone with the “Socratic method” about a philosophical topic of your choice. For example:

- Present someone with a thought experiment, such as the trolley case, the organ transplant case, the life extending killing case, the brain-in-a-jar case, the brain transplant case, etc. Get their verdict on the case. Listen to their answer. Ask them follow-up questions to get them to see the philosophical or ethical significance of their answer. For example, if you focus on the trolley case, does their answer fit better with classical utilitarianism or Kantianism, and would they revise their answer if you tweaked the thought experiment in some way? Or if you focus on the brain transplant case, does their answer conflict with animalism? In short, try to get your interviewee to do philosophy and to see the ethical or philosophical implications of the thought experiment.
- Ask someone to tell you what they know about the idea of an echo chamber. Listen to their answer. Are they confusing an echo chamber with an epistemic bubble? If so, explain the distinction to them. Ask them how they could escape from an echo chamber. Listen to their answer. Ask them follow-up questions to investigate the plausibility of their answer. Tell them about Nguyen’s proposed solution and see what they think of it.
- Ask someone if they are a human organism. If they answer “yes,” ask them whether they believe that they will continue to exist after death. If they answer “yes,” try to help them see that there is a tension between their two answers. Moreover, explain the brain transplant and conjoined twinning problems for animalism. Try to get them to see why these problems suggest that we are not human organisms. If they refuse to give up their claim that they are a human organism, ask them how they propose to avoid the problems for animalism and help them work through problems for their proposal. If they give up the view that they are a human organism, ask them what kind of thing they are instead. Listen to their answer. Ask them follow-up questions to help them clarify their alternative view—and whether their alternative view raises new problems.
- Interview someone about their dating experiences or past sexual encounters. Ask them whether they or anyone they’ve encountered has presented misleading information about themselves on dates or prior to sexual encounters. Listen to their answers. Ask them follow-up questions to figure out whether they (or anyone they know) holds a view on consent along the lines of what Tom Dougherty calls the “Lenient Thesis.” Ask them questions designed to prompt them to question the thesis.

The goal is to use your questions to challenge someone to think carefully about a philosophical question they may not have given careful attention in the past, get them to notice problems associated with different answers to the question, and hopefully help them arrive at a more consistent, less problematic, or better supported position on the topic.

To complete this option, you should do the following:

1. Find someone to interview. They can be a family member, friend, roommate, classmate from another course, or another professor. Get their permission to record an interview with them and share the recording in a classroom context.
4. Prepare a list of questions to structure your interview and write a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how your questions are meant to introduce your interviewee to a philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
2. Record the interview. Begin by asking the interviewee to introduce themselves and describe their familiarity with philosophy.
3. Upload your recording along with your original list of questions and short explanation to Blackboard.

The **second way** to complete this option is basically the same as the first, but in a writing format:

1. Find someone to interview. They can be a family member, friend, roommate, classmate from another course, or another professor. Get their permission to record the interview.
2. Prepare a list of questions to structure your interview and write a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how your questions are meant to introduce your interviewee to a philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
3. If you do this in person, record the interview and save the recording for the next step. Alternatively, you could conduct the interview through social media or email. Either way, begin by asking the interviewee to introduce themselves and describe their familiarity with philosophy.
4. Transcribe the interview. Alternatively, use the audio recording and/or text-based conversation to create a short (1–2 page) “news style” interview with quotations from the interview together with your own explanation of the philosophical or ethical significance of your conversation.<sup>3</sup> Submit the transcription or “news style” interview along with your original list of questions and short explanation.

Here are two examples of interviews in philosophy (the first in the “transcription” style and the other in the “news style”):

- <http://www.whatisitliketobeaphilosopher.com/>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/the-case-for-not-being-born>

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the following: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/the-case-for-not-being-born>

The **third way** is to make a short podcast episode (at least 3 minute long) demonstrating your understanding of a philosophical topic from this course. You can also combine this option with the previous one (using an interview as the foundation for your podcast episode). To complete this option, you should do the following:

1. Check out Hi-Phi Nation<sup>4</sup> as a model for how to make a philosophy podcast.
2. Prepare a short “script” (this could be a few bullet points outlining your episode) and a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how your episode will illustrate the philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
3. Record/host an episode in which you tell a story (fictional or based on real events) to demonstrate your understanding of your chosen philosophical topic. Feel free to use an editing tool to join different recordings together. One of my past students used the following as a tool: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/>
4. Upload your “script”/explanation and your audio file to Blackboard.

The **fourth way** is to record a short song (at least 2 minutes long) demonstrating your understanding of a philosophical topic from this course. There are several “rap battle” videos on YouTube about philosophy to illustrate the kind of thing I have in mind. See the Google Drive folder for a student example from another professor’s course. On Zoom, I’ll share an example from one of my former students.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxiHjf5KGtw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QDLEn5tE3c>
- <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1C95Dd-eVIPN8511PyLTCdHaNbSDgfPtY>

To complete this option, you should do the following:

1. Write lyrics for your song and a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how those lyrics illustrate the philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
2. Record the song. (You can record the audio, or video a live a performance of it.)
3. Upload your lyrics, short explanation, and audio/video file to Blackboard.

### **Option 3 (interactive):** Design an interactive game

Design a game to illustrate a philosophical topic that you learned about in this course. For example, Alice Zhang, a student at the University of Toronto, used JavaScript, HTML, and CSS to create a web-based game designed to illustrate the idea that robots warrant moral consideration:

- <https://social-robots.herokuapp.com/>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://hiphination.org/>

But you could also approach this option by creating a role-playing game, tabletop game, board game, card game, conversation game, guessing game, or any kind of game you'd like.

To complete this option, you should do the following:

1. Devise clearly defined aims, rules, and tools for your game.
2. Use these aims, rules, and tools to create a playable game, and write a short (2–3 paragraph) explanation of how the game works and why it illustrates a philosophical topic that you learned about in this course.
3. Upload your explanation to Blackboard and submit your game in the appropriate format. (If your game is made from non-digital tools, you'll need to give it to me in class.)

#### **Option 4:** Propose your own creative assignment

If you have some other idea for how to demonstrate your understanding of a philosophical topic while engaging others in philosophy, I am open to your suggestions. **But to take advantage of this option, you need to get my approval at least a week before the deadline.**

**Note about group work:** to discourage a situation in which one student “free rides” on the hard work of classmates, I have decided to require students to submit independent project materials. However, I may allow students to *collaborate* on certain projects. For example, suppose that two students come up with independent ideas for a video. They can spend the day helping each other make their videos, so long as they submit separate videos and separate 2–3 paragraphs explanations of the philosophical content. If you are thinking about collaborating with a classmate, I recommend checking with me to make sure that it is okay.