

# **Introduction to Philosophy**

## **Online and Asynchronous**

Spring 2022

**Instructor:** Dr. Graham Clay

**Student Hours:** Tuesdays at a time decided by class (survey due on Friday, Jan. 28)

**Student Hours Location:** Zoom (click on link on Canvas Module page)

**Office Hours:** by appointment (via Canvas message or email)

**Office Location:** Zoom (same as above; click on link on Canvas Module page)

**Class Location:** Canvas (100% online and asynchronous)

### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the discipline of philosophy consisting of a survey of central philosophical problems and attempted solutions. Issues in philosophy include the possibility of knowledge over skepticism, the nature of ultimate reality, the relation of mind and body, reason and religious faith, the standards of ethics, the nature of beauty, and the hallmarks of good reasoning. Philosophers who will guide you in your exploration of some of these topics will include Aristotle, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Emilie du Châtelet, David Hume, Linda Zagzebski, Peter van Inwagen, and Gregory Cajete. Along the way, you will learn how to read a wide variety of philosophical works, analyze others' argumentation, write philosophical essays, use some of the basic tools of logic, and reflect on your own philosophical positions.

### **Course Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will be able to explain a range of central philosophical problems and some of the main arguments for and against solutions to those problems in the three principal divisions of philosophy: value theory, metaphysics and epistemology.\*
2. Students will have developed their ability to think critically. This includes the ability to identify arguments, including their underlying assumptions, and critically evaluate those arguments by identifying questionable premises or weak or invalid inferences.\*
3. Students will have improved their ability to read primary and secondary philosophical texts, such that they can, with some guidance, identify the main arguments in them and critically assess those arguments.

4. Students will be able to apply their philosophical knowledge to formulate and support their own positions on major philosophical issues and reply to reasoned objections to them.
5. Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to offer a clear written summary of an argument from a philosophical text and explain their own critical evaluation of it.

### **Texts and Materials:**

All texts and other course materials will be provided directly in Canvas. No texts need to be purchased or acquired outside of what is linked on the Canvas homepage.

### **Feedback and Communication:**

Beyond my initial welcome email, all of my communication will occur via announcements on Canvas or via the course materials linked on the Canvas Home page. I (Dr. Clay) will strive to grade all assignments within a week of their due dates, although the three major assignments may take longer, depending on the circumstances.

### **Course Workload and Time Management:**

How can you create a weekly schedule based on your courses and study time needed for success? As long as you know the number of credit hours you are taking, it's easy!

In online courses, one course credit is the same as one hour spent doing 'time on task.' 'Time on task' includes any time you spend interacting with course materials and participating in learning activities such as readings, projects, assignments, videos, student-student or student-professor interaction, and exams. A 3-credit online course requires three hours of 'time on task' per week and 6 hours of course preparation time as well (and that's according to the federal definition of a credit hour). Thus, you should plan on an average of 9 hours per week for this class. Sometimes it may be more, sometimes less, but this is a good total to aim for. Please let me know if you fall behind or need any help figuring out your weekly schedule and meeting these course workload expectations.

## **Email and Netiquette:**

“Netiquette” is a protocol for interacting and behaving online. Although digital interactions are not face-to-face, they affect real people; thus, we must be sensitive to the fact that our words impact others. The following are an outline of ways that you can communicate professionally and sensitively online:

1. Be sensitive to others’ cultural, social, political and linguistic backgrounds. Everyone is different and unique. Remember to show respect for our differences.
2. Incorporate professionalism and good taste when composing responses in discussion forums, online collaboration and feedback tools, and other interactive spaces. Avoid profanity and other harsh comments. Minimize your use of slang, as it can be misinterpreted. Respond in a timely fashion and be charitable.
3. Avoid using all capital letters as it can be construed as “shouting” online, which can be perceived as aggressive behavior.
4. When using acronyms, make sure to clarify their meaning when you first use them in your message.
5. Proofread your responses for accuracy and tone.

## **Academic Integrity:**

Academic dishonesty includes all forms of unethical or illegal behavior which affects a student’s academic standing, including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, plagiarism, forgery of academic documents, falsification of information on academic documents, or unauthorized access to computer files containing academic information. Academic dishonesty may result in sanctions ranging from a grade of 0 on a particular assignment to an "F" in the class and report submitted.

## **TurnItIn Plagiarism Software:**

Plagiarism occurs when someone presents the ideas or work of another person as their own, without giving proper credit. Self-plagiarism means reusing work you have already published or submitted in a class. Written assignments in this course will undergo a similarity assessment by Turnitin, which is software used to detect these acts and reinforce best practices when using and citing the work of others or oneself. By taking this course, students acknowledge and give their consent that these papers will be submitted to Turnitin and might be included in a secure repository, used for comparison to papers submitted by others in the future. All Turnitin submissions will take place within Canvas, which is also where students can access any reports generated by Turnitin.

## Reach out for Success:

College students encounter setbacks from time to time. If you encounter difficulties and need assistance, it's important to reach out. Consider discussing the situation with an instructor, academic advisor, peer support office, or counselor.

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## Grading:

### 43% - Weekly or Bi-Weekly Tasks

#### 0% - Group Discussion Board Posts

You will be in a three- or four-person Canvas group with two or three of your classmates all semester. Every week, there will be an open discussion board available for you to post questions, thoughts, and otherwise interact with your groupmates, if you want to. Think of this space as like chatting with your friends about the class in person before and after class meetings (or while you study). [This is not a graded assignment.]

#### 0% - Student Hours

Every Tuesday starting February 1, there will be an optional period (at a time decided by the class in a poll due Friday, January 28 at 11:59 PM) for you to come on Zoom, listen to brief symposia from me (Dr. Clay) on important topics, ask me about course content and assignments, talk with your classmates about the course, or just listen to what other people are saying. [This is not a graded assignment.]

#### 6% - Activities [1% each]

On some days (generally Wednesdays, after the first week), there will be a self-guided activity due on Canvas at 11:59 PM. The goal of these six activities is to guide you through important course concepts with the assistance of some interactive activities, demonstrations, and tutorials. Your task is to read all the slides, mentally engage with the activity, and submit any answers requested. If you earnestly complete this task on a given Wednesday by 11:59 PM, you will get a perfect score for that day. [Your activities will be graded based on completion. You will *not* get instructor feedback on these assignments.]

13% - Hypothesis Contributions (+ One Flipgrid Introduction) [1% each]

On Wednesday, January 26, you must submit a Flipgrid video contribution that is less than 1 minute and 30 seconds long introducing yourself to the class. Then, every Wednesday, starting with Module 2, you must turn in two Hypothesis annotations by 11:59 PM. Hypothesis is a social text annotation plugin for Canvas. Your task is to *both* (a) annotate the reading to ask a substantive question about it *and* (b) respond substantively to others' questions or responses. (a) and (b) are the two annotations I (Dr. Clay) expect of you. The goal of these assignments is to practice thinking and interacting in a philosophical way with your classmates by jointly annotating the readings for that day. If you earnestly complete this task on a given Wednesday by 11:59 PM, you will get a perfect score for that day. [Your annotations will be graded based on completion and effort. You will *not* get instructor feedback on these assignments. Your lowest annotation score will be dropped.]

14% - Review Quizzes [2% each]

Every other Monday (noted on syllabus), there will be a multiple-choice 4-minute quiz due at 11:59 PM. The goal of these quizzes is to evaluate the extent to which you understood the readings assigned for the day of a given quiz. They are intended as checks of your comprehension. You should come to student hours or schedule an office hours appointment if you are running into trouble. The quizzes will be posted, received, and automatically graded on Canvas. [Your quizzes will be graded based on correctness. You will get automated feedback with the correct answers to these assignments. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.]

10% - Reading Responses [2% each]

Every other Monday (noted on syllabus), there will be a 1-2 paragraph reading response due at 11:59 PM. The goal of these assignments is to get you in the habit of writing philosophically, relating your preconceptions and preexisting views to the course content, and reflecting on your progress. They are also intended to spark ideas that you can develop further on the discussion boards, in your papers, or beyond the class. The assignments will be posted, received, and manually graded on Canvas. If you earnestly complete this task on a given Monday by 11:59 PM, you will get a perfect score for that day. [Your reading responses will be graded based on completion and effort. You will *occasionally* receive instructor feedback on these assignments. Your lowest response score will be dropped.]

## 59% - Unique or Irregular Tasks (includes two Bonuses)

### 1% - Bonus Syllabus Annotation

By Friday, January 28 at 11:59 PM, you can annotate the class syllabus (this document) on Hypothesis for bonus points. You will get full bonus points if you *both* (a) annotate the syllabus to ask a substantive question about it *and* (b) make a substantive comment about an aspect of the course (feel free to make your comment an answer to one of your classmate's questions if you know the answer). [Your annotations will be graded based on completion. I (Dr. Clay) will answer all the questions in Student Hours on Tuesday, February 1.]

### 1% - Bonus Logic Challenge

There will be a 1.5-hour bonus logic challenge due on Canvas on Friday, February 4 at 11:59 PM. It will consist of two logic problems that require you to apply this content yourself. If you understand everything in Activity #1A and Activity #1B, you are equipped to get a perfect score on this challenge. [Your answers will be graded based on correctness. You will get generic feedback with the correct answers.]

### 6% - Videos [0.5% each]

At the beginning of each Module and several other times, there will be a video from Dr. Clay that will help foreshadow the Module, synthesize what you have learned already, and/or prepare you for success in the course. Your job is to watch the video, as well as complete all of the in-video checks for understanding and quizzes. [Your video engagement will be graded based on completion. You will *not* get instructor feedback on these assignments.]

### 5% - Group Expository Paper

Due Friday, February 11 at 11:59 PM, this expository paper will concern the topics of Module 2. You and your group have some flexibility in the topic you exposit—perhaps you would like to tackle nudging or perhaps Kantianism—but the structure and content of the finished product must conform with my (Dr. Clay's) requirements. These requirements are that your writing is *purely* explanatory (i.e., not critical or persuasive), is in your group's own words, has a 2-part structure (discussing the context and the argument in premise-conclusion form), and does not concern the arguments that any of you will analyze for the Solo Expository Paper. More information about this paper, as well as a grading rubric, will be

provided on Canvas. [Your paper will be graded based on the rubric. You will get brief instructor feedback on this activity.]

#### 2% - Introductory Meeting with Dr. Clay

By Friday, February 11 at 11:59 PM, you must meet with me (Dr. Clay) to introduce yourself, get to know me, and discuss your interests, goals, and priorities for the course. It is your responsibility to schedule this meeting via the Canvas Calendar link provided on Canvas. If none of the days/times on the Canvas Calendar work for you, it is your responsibility to email me to find a day/time that is mutually acceptable. [This task will be graded based on completion.]

#### 10% - Solo Expository Paper

Due Friday, March 4 at 11:59 PM, this 1000-word-maximum expository paper will concern the topics of Module 2. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your paper—perhaps you would like to tackle nudging or perhaps Kantianism—but the structure and content of the paper must conform with my (Dr. Clay's) requirements. These requirements are that the paper is *purely* explanatory (i.e., not critical or persuasive), is in your own words, has a 3-part structure (introduction, body, and conclusion), and does not concern the argument your group analyzed in the Group Expository Activity. More information about this paper, as well as a grading rubric, will be provided on Canvas. [Your paper will be graded based on the rubric. You will get instructor feedback on this paper.]

#### 14% - Critical Paper

Due Friday, April 8 at 11:59 PM, this 1500-word-maximum critical paper will concern the topics of Module 3 or Module 4. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your paper—perhaps you would like to tackle incompatibilism or perhaps the bundle view—but the structure and content of the paper must conform with my (Dr. Clay's) requirements. These requirements are that the paper gives reasons *to reject* a philosophical position (i.e., not merely expository), is in your own words, and has a 4-part structure (introduction, exposition of position rejected, reasons for rejection, conclusion). More information about this paper, as well as a grading rubric, will be provided on Canvas. [Your paper will be graded based on the rubric. You will get instructor feedback on this paper.]

#### 2% - Meeting with Dr. Clay about Persuasive Project

By Friday, April 29 at 11:59 PM, you must meet with me (Dr. Clay) to discuss your ideas about, plans for, and/or drafts of your persuasive

project. It is your responsibility to schedule this meeting via the Canvas Calendar link provided on Canvas. If none of the days/times on the Canvas Calendar work for you, it is your responsibility to email me to find a day/time that is mutually acceptable. [This task will be graded based on completion.]

### 18% - Persuasive Project

Due Friday, May 13 at 11:59 PM, this 2000-word-maximum persuasive paper OR 10-minute-maximum video will concern the topics of Module 5. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your project—perhaps you would like to argue that an all-good God exists or perhaps that a certain solution to the problem of evil works—but the structure of the paper or video must conform with my (Dr. Clay's) requirements. These requirements are that the paper or video gives reasons *in favor of* a philosophical position (not merely critical), is in your own words, is original to some degree, and has a 6-part structure (introduction, exposition of position defended, reasons for favoring it, good objection to position defended, your critical response to objection, conclusion). More information about this project, as well as a grading rubric, will be provided on Canvas. [Your project will be graded based on the rubric. You will get instructor feedback on this project.]

### **Late Policy:**

All assignments turned in late will lose 10% from their earned grade for each day that they are late. So, for instance, if you were to turn in a paper 19 hours after the deadline, and if you would have earned a 99% on it, you would lose 10% to end with a grade of 89%.

### **Grading Scale by Percentage:**

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69



D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0-59

## Class Schedule

### COLOR KEY:

- : Readings (ungraded)
- : Student Hours, Student Hours Survey, Mid-Term Survey (ungraded)
- : Videos (graded)
- : Flipgrid Introductions, Quizzes, Reading Responses, Hypothesis Annotations, Activities, Meetings with Dr. Clay, Papers/Projects (graded)
- : Bonus Syllabus Annotation Activity and Bonus Logic Quiz (extra credit)

### NOTE:

All items are listed on the day that they are due (or should be completed by). Everything except **readings**, which are not turned in, is due by 11:59 PM on the day that it is listed. Feel free to work ahead if you prefer.

## Module 1: Logic

### *Module-Level Objectives:*

- Students will have improved their ability to locate arguments in texts, formulate them in premise-conclusion form, and evaluate their validity.
- Students will have improved their ability to read philosophical prose (both primary and secondary).

Monday, January 24 -

**Video #1**

**Activity #1A**

**Reading #1**

*Reasoning and Analysis*

- Excerpts from Rachels, J., & Rachels, S., (2012), *Problems from Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Appendix).

Wednesday, January 26 -

**Activity #1B**

*Reasoning and Analysis*

**Reading #2** - Excerpts from Clay, G., (2018), "The Consistency Principle."

**Flipgrid Introductions**

Friday, January 28 -

**Student Hours Survey**

**BONUS Syllabus Annotation Activity**

## Module 2: Ethics

*Module-Level Objectives:*

- Students will be able to explain some of the central ethical problems, as well as the main arguments for and solutions to those problems.
- Students will have improved their ability to locate ethical arguments in texts, formulate them in premise-conclusion form, and evaluate their validity.
- Students will have improved their ability to read philosophical prose (both primary and secondary).
- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to summarize and explain the validity or invalidity of a philosophical argument.

Monday, January 31 -

*Nudging*

**Video #2**

**Reading #3**

- Excerpts from Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R., (2008), *Nudge*.

**Quiz #1**

Tuesday, February 1 -

**Student Hours – Symposium on Course and on Logic**

Wednesday, February 2 - *Immigration*

**Video #3**

**Reading #4:**

- Excerpts from Van Der Vossen, B., & Brennan, J., (2018), *In Defense of Openness*.

**Hypothesis #1**

**-- BONUS Logic Challenge Due Friday, February 4 at 11:59 PM --**

Monday, February 7 -

*Moral Distance*

**Reading #5:**

- Excerpts from Singer, P., (1972), "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

**Reading Response #1**

Tuesday, February 8 -

**Student Hours**

Wednesday, February 9 - *Veganism*

**Reading #6:**

- Excerpts from Norcross, A., (2004), "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases."

**Hypothesis #2**

**-- Group Expository Activity due by Friday, February 11 at 11:59 PM --**

**-- Meet 1-on-1 with Dr. Clay by Friday, February 11 at 11:59 PM --**

Monday, February 14 -

*Virtue Ethics*

**Video #4**

**Reading #7:**

- Excerpts from Aristotle, (~330 BCE), *Nicomachean Ethics*.

- Excerpts from Zagzebski, L., (1996), *Virtues of the Mind*.

- [Short video introduction to virtue ethics.](#)

**Quiz #2**

Tuesday, February 15 -

**Student Hours – Symposium on Ethics**

Wednesday, February 16 - *Utilitarianism*

**Reading #8:**

- Excerpts from Mill, J.S., (1863), *Utilitarianism* (Chapter 2).

- [Short video introduction to utilitarianism.](#)

**Hypothesis #3**

Monday, February 21 -

*Iroquoian Ethics*

**Activity #2**

**Reading #9:**

- [Excerpts from video with Lyons, O., \(2016\).](#)

**Reading Response #2**

Tuesday, February 22 -

**Student Hours**

Wednesday, February 23 - *Kantianism*

**Reading #10:**

- Excerpts from Kant, I., (1785), *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

- [Short video introduction to Kantianism.](#)

### Hypothesis #4

Monday, February 28 -

### Reading #11:

*Objectivity of Ethics*

- Excerpts from Rachels, J., & Rachels, S., (2012), *Problems from Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Chapter 11).

### Quiz #3

Tuesday, March 1 -

### Student Hours – Symposium on Solo Expository Paper

## Module 3: Free Will

### Module-Level Objectives:

- Students will be able to explain some of the central freedom-related problems and the main arguments for and solutions to those problems.
- Students will have improved their ability to locate arguments related to freedom in texts, formulate them in premise-conclusion form, and evaluate their validity.
- Students will have improved their ability to read philosophical prose (both primary and secondary).
- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to summarize and explain the validity or invalidity of a philosophical argument.
- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to critically evaluate the plausibility of a philosophical argument.

Wednesday, March 2 -

### Reading #12:

*Determinism*

- Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy* (Chapter 8).

### Hypothesis #5

**-- Solo Expository Paper due Friday, March 4 at 11:59 PM --**

Monday, March 7 -

### Video #5

*Incompatibilism*

### Reading #13:

- Excerpts from Van Inwagen, P., (1975), "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism."

### Reading Response #3

Tuesday, March 8 -

### Student Hours

Wednesday, March 9 -      *Compatibilism*  
**Video #6**  
**Activity #3**  
**Reading #14:**      - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1748), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.  
**Hypothesis #6**

**-- Mid-Term Feedback Survey due Friday, March 11 at 11:59 PM --**

Monday, March 14 -      *Reflections on the Debate over Free Will*  
**Reading #15:**      - Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy* (Chapter 9).  
**Quiz #4**

Tuesday, March 15 -  
**Student Hours – Symposium on Free Will**

Wednesday, March 16 -      *Reflections on the Debate over Free Will*  
**Reading #16:**      - Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy* (Chapter 9).  
**Hypothesis #7**

Monday, March 21 -                      **SPRING BREAK**  
Wednesday, March 23 -                      **SPRING BREAK**  
Friday, March 25 -                      **SPRING BREAK**

#### **Module 4: Personal Identity**

##### *Module-Level Objectives:*

- Students will be able to explain some of the central personal identity problems and the main arguments for and solutions to those problems.
- Students will have improved their ability to locate arguments related to personal identity in texts, formulate them in premise-conclusion form, and evaluate their validity.
- Students will have improved their ability to read philosophical prose (both primary and secondary).
- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to summarize and explain the validity or invalidity of a philosophical argument.
- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to critically evaluate the plausibility of a philosophical argument.

Monday, March 28 -                      *The Consciousness View*  
**Video #7**

**Reading #17:** - Excerpts from Locke, J., (1700), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

**Reading Response #4**

Tuesday, March 29 -

**Student Hours**

Wednesday, March 30 - *The Bundle View*

**Video #8**

**Reading #18:** - Excerpts from Hume, D., (1738), *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*.

**Hypothesis #8**

Monday, April 4 - *The Human Animal View*

**Reading #19:** - Excerpts from DeGrazia, D., (2005), "Human Persons" and Olson, E., (1999), "The Biological Approach."

**Quiz #5**

Tuesday, April 5 -

**Student Hours – Symposium on Personal Identity**

Wednesday, April 6 - *The Dualist View*

**Activity #4**

**Reading #20:** - Excerpts from Swinburne, R., (1984), "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory."

**Hypothesis #9**

**-- Solo Critical Paper due Friday, April 8 at 11:59 PM --**

## Module 5: Theism & Science

### *Module-Level Objectives:*

- Students will be able to explain some of the central theological problems and the main arguments for and solutions to those problems.
- Students will have improved their ability to locate theistic and atheistic arguments in texts, formulate them in premise-conclusion form, and evaluate their validity.
- Students will have improved their ability to read philosophical prose (both primary and secondary).
- Students will be able to apply their philosophical knowledge to formulate and support their own positions on major philosophical issues and reply to reasoned objections to them.

- Students will have improved their written communication skills sufficiently to create and defend their own philosophical argument (for their own position).

Monday, April 11 -

*The Cosmological Argument*

**Video #9**

**Reading #21:**

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1697) *On the Ultimate Origination of Things*; excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1710), *Theodicy*; and excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1714), *Monadology*.

**Reading Response #5**

Tuesday, April 12 -

**Student Hours**

Wednesday, April 13 -

*The Principle of Sufficient Reason*

**Reading #22:**

- Excerpts from du Châtelet, E., (1740), *Foundations*.

**Hypothesis #10**

Monday, April 18 -

*The Design Argument*

**Video #10**

**Reading #23:**

- Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1695), *A Specimen of Dynamics* and excerpts from Hume, D., (1779), *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

**Quiz #6**

Tuesday, April 19 -

**Student Hours – Symposium on Theism**

Wednesday, April 20 -

*Pascal's Wager*

**Activity #5**

**Reading #24:**

- Excerpts from Pascal, B., (1670), *Pensées de M. Pascal sur la religion et sur quelques autres sujets*.

**Hypothesis #11**

Monday, April 25 -

*The Problem of Evil and Leibniz's Solution*

**Video #11**

**Reading #25:**

- Excerpts from Hume, D., (1779), *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.  
 - Excerpts from Leibniz, G.W., (1710), *Theodicy*.  
 - [Short video on the problem of evil](#).

**Reading Response #6**

Tuesday, April 26 -

**Student Hours**

Wednesday, April 27 -

*The Problem of Evil and Van Inwagen's Solution*

**Video #12**

**Reading #26:**

- Excerpts from Van Inwagen, P., (2008), *The Problem of Evil*.

**Hypothesis #12**

**-- Meet with Dr. Clay by Friday, April 29 at 11:59 PM --**

Monday, May 2 -

*The Relationship between Religion and Science*

**Reading #27:**

- Excerpts from Plantinga, A., (2010), "Religion and Science."

- Excerpts from LaPier, R.R., (2017), "[Why Native Americans do not Separate out Religion from Science.](#)"

**Quiz #7**

Tuesday, May 3 -

**Student Hours – Symposium on Persuasive Project**

Wednesday, May 4 -

*The Relationship between Religion and Science*

**Reading #28:**

- Excerpts from Cajete, G., (1999), *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*.

**Hypothesis #13**

**-- Solo Persuasive Project due Friday, May 13 at 11:59 PM --**