

# Intensive Seminar on Objectivism Part II: Normative Principles

## ARU Syllabus

Last updated: April 3, 2025

**COURSE TITLE:** Intensive Seminar on Objectivism Part II: Normative Principles

**COURSE YEAR AND QUARTER:** 2024-25, Q3-Q4

**PRE-REQUISITE COURSES:**

Intensive Seminar on Objectivism Part I: Foundations

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

We will explore in some depth key normative principles of Objectivism, especially in epistemology, ethics, and politics. In Part I, the focus was on foundational philosophical issues. In Part II, the focus is on the guidance Objectivism offers for thought and action. But as in Part I, we will keep in continual focus the fact that Objectivism is a full system of philosophy.

**COURSE DURATION:** 16 weeks

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of the course is to help you learn how to better understand various principles of Objectivism and philosophical issues more generally.

The cash value of gaining a better understanding of the principles of Objectivism, including some of its advice about proper philosophical methodology, is that the philosophy can become more fully an aid to your own life: to your thinking, work and happiness.

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** Dr. Onkar Ghatе

Dr. Ghatе is senior fellow, chief philosophy officer, and a board member of the Ayn Rand Institute. He specializes in Rand's philosophy, Objectivism, and is ARI's senior instructor and editor. He publishes and lectures on Rand's philosophy and fiction, including application of Objectivism to cultural issues. He holds a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Calgary.

**Teaching Assistants**

Lead TA:

**Alex Silverman**

Assistant TA:  
**Tristan de Liege**

### **WEEKLY COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course consists of both recorded lectures and live classes in which we will discuss course material and course assignments. Live classes for this course will be held weekly on **Wednesdays, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM Pacific Time**. The first live class will take place on Wednesday, April 9, 2025.

Participants are strongly encouraged to attend classes live for the best experience. However, we are aware that this is not always possible and recordings of live classes are posted on the course website and on the ARU App/ARI Campus website, usually within an hour or two after the conclusion of each live class. Please watch these if you are unable to attend live. Contact [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) if you have any issue accessing a recording.

If you attend class live, please turn on your camera unless you are in a setting with distracting activity going on, your device is not on a stable surface, or you have insufficient bandwidth for video. It makes for a much better experience for all participants when faces are visible.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

These will be posted in the course website

### **WEEK-BY-WEEK OUTLINE OF TOPICS**

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Objectivity</li></ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Logic: context and hierarchy</li><li>● Plato and Hume on nature and place of emotions</li></ul>
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Reason, emotions, faith and the arbitrary</li></ul>
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Certainty, mysticism and skepticism</li></ul>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Pleasure and the foundations of ethics</li><li>● Happiness</li></ul>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The virtue of independence</li><li>● The virtue of productiveness</li></ul>
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The virtue of honesty</li><li>● The virtue of justice</li></ul>
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The virtue of integrity</li><li>● The virtue of pride</li><li>● The egoism and objectivity of virtues and values</li></ul>

## READINGS

Similar to Part I, we will be reading selections from many of Ayn Rand's books and some other Objectivist works, such as:

- For the New Intellectual (FNI)
- Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (CUI)
- Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology (ITOE)
- Philosophy: Who Needs It (PWNI)
- The Virtue of Selfishness (VOS)
- The Return of the Primitive (ROP)
- The Romantic Manifesto (RM)
- The Voice of Reason (VOR)
- The Art of Nonfiction (AON)
- Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand by Leonard Peikoff (OPAR)

We will also be reading some pieces by other authors; these will be available online or as PDFs on the course website.

Please see the course website for the weekly readings.

## ASSIGNMENTS

These are the types of assignments that you will have to complete.

1. **Each week**, you will be required to **answer a question** posed by the instructors. These assignments will be posted by the Thursday before the relevant live class on Wednesday and will be due on the Monday (noon PT) before that Wednesday's live class. For example, the first live class will be on Wednesday, April 09, which means that the question(s) to be answered prior to this class will be posted by midnight PT on Thursday, April 02, and will be due at noon PT on Monday, April 07. Please post your answer before watching the recorded lectures for that week.

**Why are you being asked to answer a question before the lecture on the topic?** It is easy to read Rand's essays and nod passively in agreement. But in order to get the most out of the material as well as the lectures in the course, you need to think carefully about the readings and grapple with the arguments being made therein. This assignment requires you to do that and then to convey in writing what you think you have understood from the readings and their arguments. The issues you are being asked about will then be explored in more depth in the lectures, with further follow-up in the live class discussions.

2. **Each week**, you are required to **submit a question** about the recorded lectures and the topics discussed therein. In submitting the question, **you need to explain your current thinking about the question**: e.g., what is generating the question or why are you asking it, whether you have a hypothesis about what the answer to your question is, whether you

think your question is important or not and why, or stating it a bit differently, how gaining more clarity on the matter you're raising will advance your understanding of Rand's ideas. The submission deadline for this is also then Monday (noon PT) before that Wednesday's class.

**Why are we asking for such details when you post your question?** Because these details shape what the question really is and means, and often point one to the path to answering it; the more habitual it becomes for you to ask for such details about your own questions, the easier it will become for you to start answering your own questions.

**In order to receive full points for this assignment**, your question must: (1) be a single focused and well-defined question; (2) be relevant to the topic of the recorded lecture; (3) include, as explained above, an explanation of why you are asking the question (e.g., what value you seek to gain by clarifying your confusion on this matter, or why you think you are confused about the issue); (4) be submitted on time and remain within the word limit.

Note that both sets of weekly assignments are aimed at encouraging and developing an active, integrating mind in regard to philosophical issues.

3. **Each quarter**, you will have **one tutorial paper** to write,, in which you will answer one of the assigned topics. In your paper, you should focus not on rhetorical style, but on how clearly you can get your thoughts and arguments stated in writing. The papers will be discussed in a tutorial session with an instructor or with TAs, and will have a maximum word count of 1,400 words (or less). You will receive a grade after the session, which will take into account both the quality of the paper and the discussion of it.

Papers will be judged by how well you can present the position you are advancing. Especially important will be whether you offer evidence (including your own examples) and arguments for the claims you make. You will receive oral feedback on the paper in a scheduled session with instructors or TAs; no additional, written feedback will be provided.

Please note that staying within the maximum word count, when there is one stated, is an important part of an assignment and will be reflected in the assignment's grade.

#### **OVERALL COURSE GRADE:**

The weighting of your assignments for your final grade will be:

- 40% of total = average of your short assignment answers, each graded on a scale of 0 to 5
- 20% of total = average of your short assignment questions, each graded on a scale of 0 to 5
- 40% of total = average of your grade on your tutorial papers, graded on a scale of 0 to 20

At the instructors' discretion, you may be awarded up to three bonus percentage points for your class participation, which will be based on in-class activity and activity during office hours. For example, if your grade for the course would have been 83% and you are awarded 2 percentage points as a bonus, your final grade for the course will be 85%.

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**GENERAL POLICIES:**

Familiarize yourself with the [ARU Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

**COURSE WEBSITE:**

Logistical details about the course are available at the course website[LINK to be provided by ARU], including:

- Live class schedule and Zoom link for attending live classes
- Recordings of past classes
- Office hour details, including links to book an appointment
- Teaching assistant information
- How to join the ARU Discord server

The course website is also accessible through your dashboard after logging into the [ARU website](#). Contact [aru@aynrand.org](mailto:aru@aynrand.org) if you have any issues accessing the site.

**COURSE COMMUNICATION:**

- Course announcements are posted in the Announcements tab of the course website and automatically emailed to all participants. Please make sure you are receiving these emails and that they are not going to your spam folder. If you join after the start of class, be sure to check the Announcements tab for anything you may have missed.
- For questions about course content, structure or schedule, please ask during the live class or in the course channel on the ARU Discord server (see the Discord tab of the course website). Questions about your assignments and grades should be directed to the teaching assistant.
- For personal administrative issues (e.g., website problems), contact [aru@aynrand.org](mailto:aru@aynrand.org).
- If you have a technical issue preventing submission of an assignment, email your assignment to the TA and cc: [aru@aynrand.org](mailto:aru@aynrand.org) to troubleshoot the matter.