

**PHI 2010, Section 3022, Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2019**

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Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to introduce you to philosophy. Philosophers ask many questions about the fundamental nature of reality and our place in it. Among those many questions are: What is knowledge? Do we have any knowledge of the external world? Do we have free will? What does free will require? Are there objective moral truths? If so, can we know them? Does God exist? In this class, we'll try to get clearer about these questions by considering some of the major issues that arise when we try to answer them. We will do so by critically evaluating some key philosophical texts and arguments in the areas of epistemology (theory of knowledge), metaphysics (the study of ultimate reality), and meta-ethics (essentially the metaphysics and epistemology of ethics).

Philosophers seek answers to their questions through rational argument. Thus we shall start by focusing on the nature of arguments and some basic logic, which will form the foundation upon which we evaluate the arguments we will encounter later in the class.

REQUIREMENTS SATISFIED BY SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE COURSE

Students in this course can earn 4000 words towards the UF Writing Requirement (WR). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

PHI 2010 provides 3 credits towards the Philosophy major or minor, and is a General Education – Humanities (H) course as well.

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

PHI 2010 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with some key philosophical topics and arguments concerning knowledge, free will, the nature of ethical truths, and the existence of God. Students will become adept at thinking critically, analyzing arguments, and writing clearly and persuasively.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: **CONTENT** – students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline; **COMMUNICATION** – students communicate knowledge, ideas and

reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline; and **CRITICAL THINKING** – students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Students will satisfy the **CONTENT SLO** by demonstrating a mastery of some key philosophical concepts as well as central arguments in the discipline. The **COMMUNICATION SLO** will be achieved by two Short Writing Assignments (400-600 words each), three Argumentative Essays (1100-1500 words each), and regular participation in class. Students will be required to explain and evaluate various philosophical views. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the **CRITICAL THINKING SLO** through the Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays, which will be on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. Writing assignments and papers will be graded on the bases of a student's comprehension of the relevant issues, development and cogent defense of her or his position, clarity of expression, and mechanics.

In short, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain some traditional philosophical positions as well as common objections to these.
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive and cogent arguments for particular philosophical positions
- Think critically about difficult and complex topics

Required Texts

Various articles on Canvas, accessible in the 'Readings' folder, located in the 'Files' folder. *I highly recommend that you print these out and bring them to class, as I refer to them frequently and expect you to answer specific questions about the texts.*

Recommended texts and resources

On writing well generally:

Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition. (Pearson, 1999).

The full text can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbmxiemVhdG9uc2V3YzRlfGd4OjQ1MmU3OWFiNzAzZTk2M2M>

On writing a philosophy paper:

Pryor, Jim. "A Brief Guide to Writing a Philosophy paper" (2008). The pdf is available on Canvas in the 'Paper Writing Information' folder, which is under the 'Files' folder, but it can also be found here:

http://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

University Writing Program:

The writing service offers one-on-one service with a tutor who will help students learn to become better writers and editors. It is free for all current UF students. Please see <https://writing.ufl.edu> for more information.

Evaluation

- 3 Argumentative Essays (AEs), each approximately 1100-1500 words long. The first is due Monday, September 23rd; the second is due Monday, October 21st, and the third is due Monday, November 18th. Each AE worth 20% of the course grade. AEs combined equal 60% of the final course grade.
- 2 Short writing assignments (SWAs), each approximately 400-600 words long. Each SWA is worth 10% of your final grade; combined they total 20%. 4 SWAs will be assigned. *You are only required to submit 2, but you may choose to submit more. Only your two highest scores will count towards your grade.* Due Dates for SWAs are as follows: SWA 1 is due Friday, September 13th; SWA 2 is due Monday, October 7th; SWA 3 is due Monday, November 4th, and SWA 4 is due Monday, December 2nd.
- Midterm and Final Exams, each worth 10% of your course grade; combined they amount to 20% of the final course grade. Both will be given in class at our regularly scheduled time. The Midterm will be on Wednesday, October 16th and the final on Wednesday, December 4th.

This course provides Writing Requirement credit of 4000 words. As such, it aims to ensure that you complete a minimum of 4000 words of writing evaluated for its effectiveness, organization, and clarity as well as grammar, punctuation, and usage of standard written English. (For more information on the Writing Requirement, see <http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement.aspx>.)

In order to get the Writing Requirement (WR) credit, you must get at least a C for the course grade, but that is not enough. You must also do well enough on the writing assignments. More precisely, you must also (i) complete at least 2 SWAs with a C average or better on the writing components [Note: only your two highest scoring SWAs will count towards this] and (ii) complete all AEs with a C average or better on the writing components.

Further things to note:

- (1) You will frequently be assigned a new writing assignment very soon after turning another one in. Don't let this stress you out. The point is to provide you as much time as possible to work on the assignments and to better balance your other commitments.
 - Notice that AE 1 is due near the midterm exam, and SWA 3 is due near the final exam. Plan accordingly.
- (2) No Short Writing Assignment (SWA) or Argumentative Essay (AE) will be accepted after its due date without penalty except by 24-hour prior arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, or a **documented** university approved excuse.

UF's policy: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1516/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

The penalty for late writing assignments is as follows: points equaling a full letter grade deduction will be subtracted from your grade *for each day the assignment is late*. Lesser deductions will apply to assignments turned in less than 24 hours after the due date. *No writing assignment will be accepted 4 days after the due date.*

- (3) There will be no make-up exams except by specific arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled exam date or a **documented** university approved excuse.

- (4) All papers will be submitted through Canvas and subject to anti-plagiarism detection via Turnitin software. Furthermore, I've discovered numerous cases of plagiarism that Turnitin has missed. Students found plagiarizing will receive an 'E' for the course. If you have any questions about how to cite properly, don't hesitate to get in touch. I'm happy to assist you.
- (5) I strongly recommend that you **not** use outside sources for any of the writing assignments. This is for four reasons.
- Grades for writing assignments have a Comprehension component that requires you to show proficiency with the course material, specifically the texts assigned for class and the information conveyed in lecture and discussion. Students who rely on outside sources frequently fail to properly focus on this information, and their grades suffer as a result.
 - Some students are tempted to use outside sources when they're having difficulty understanding the material. However, if you find yourself in this situation, outside sources frequently don't help. This is because many of these sources are professional and are pitched at a different audience. So you may find them more confusing than helpful, which will affect your writing. Although I don't want to dissuade you from looking at other sources for your edification, please be careful and don't hesitate to discuss the material or your ideas with me. I'm here to help.
 - Although there are many reputable sources, others – especially online sources – are not particularly trustworthy. It can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not without already being very familiar with the material.
 - There is a higher risk of inadvertently plagiarizing. When writing, it's good to be focused on the ideas and lines of argument. But it's also easy to lose track of the sources of your information and to fail to cite when you should. If this happens with class material, then I know where the information is coming from, and there's usually little concern that you're representing someone else's work as your own. However, this is not the case with outside sources. If you fail to identify an outside source, then, whether you intend to or not, you *are* representing someone else's work as your own, and that's plagiarism. See the section of the syllabus on Academic Dishonesty for more on this.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93 = A	A = 4.0
92-90 = A-	A- = 3.67
89-86 = B+	B+ = 3.33
85-82 = B	B = 3.00
81-79 = B-	B- = 2.67
78-76 = C+	C+ = 2.33
75-72 = C	C = 2.00
71-69 = C-	C- = 1.67
68-66 = D+	D+ = 1.33
65-62 = D	D = 1.00
61-60 = D-	D- = 0.67
59-0 = E	E = 0.00

Course Policies

Attendance: Regular attendance is very important. Failing to attend regularly results in missing explanations and discussions about the material and lost opportunities to ask questions, to check your understanding, and to try out potential lines of objections and responses. Students who miss out on these inevitably receive lower grades – often significantly lower – than their classmates who attend regularly.

There will be a daily attendance sheet that I expect you to sign.

Electronic Devices: No electronics are permitted in the classroom, since they are often a distraction and have been shown to negatively affect learning. There are various sources documenting this. See, for example, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/using-laptops-in-class-harms-academic-performance-study-warns> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>

Tardiness: As a courtesy to your classmates and me, please be on time. Should you be late, you're still welcome and encouraged to attend. However, if tardiness becomes problematic or habitual, a problem, I reserve the right to not allow you to sign the attendance sheet.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Dishonesty

All students must conform to the policies of UF's honor code regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the use of copyrighted materials (see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>). *Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course.* Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted to the full extent of the UF honesty policy.

Let me say a word about plagiarism, since it's the most common honor code violation that I've encountered by far. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows:

“A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.

4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.”
(<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>)

You’re responsible for ensuring that you’re familiar with the Honor Code and don’t run afoul of it. The easiest way to avoid plagiarism, for example, is to ensure that you cite your sources properly. This is especially important if you use outside sources for the writing assignments. Let me emphasize again, however, that ***I strongly recommend that you refrain from using outside sources in your writing assignments.*** If you’re uncertain how to cite properly, let me know, and I’ll be happy to assist you.

CANVAS E-learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>, click the **e-Learning Login** button under, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. Logging in will take you to the main page, where you can access the PHI 3300 e-Learning environment by clicking on the course name in the banner toward the top left of the page.

- Check the ‘Readings’ link in the ‘Files’ tab for all readings.
- Check the ‘Assignments’ tab for SWA and AE topics and directions assignments.
- Check the ‘Announcements’ tab in the e-Learning environment for new course content.

If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed.

Meetings and Readings

Read all assigned material carefully before coming to class. I expect you to read each article several times. Make sure to read the article for each class that it is assigned: i.e. if an article is assigned for more than one class, read and re-read it before each class during which we’ll be discussing it. Be prepared to bring up any questions or objections you have and to join in a general discussion.

Introduction

Wednesday, August 21st – Introduction

Friday, August 23rd – Beardsley’s and Beardsley’s “What is Philosophy?”

Recommended reading: Corvino’s “The Fact/Opinion Distinction”. He argues that that the terms ‘fact’ and ‘opinion’ are meaningless and pernicious; therefore, we should no longer use them.

Arguments and Logic

Monday, August 26th – McCarty’s “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

Wednesday, August 28th – McCarty’s “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

Epistemology

Friday, August 30th – Bonjour’s SEK Sections, 1.1-1.2

Monday, September 2nd – NO CLASS...Labor Day

Wednesday, September 4th – Haack’s “Epistemology: who needs it?”

Friday, September 6th – Descartes’ *Meditation 1* and Pollack’s “A Brain in a Vat”

Monday, September 9th – Descartes’ *Meditation 1*

Wednesday, September 11th – Moore’s “Certainty” excerpt; Renee Smith’s “Moore and Descartes meet in a Bar”

Friday, September 13th – Moore’s “Certainty” excerpt

SWA 1 due

Monday, September 16th – Catch up day

Wednesday, September 18th – Discussion of Argumentative Essay 1

Free Will

Friday, September 20th – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Monday, September 23rd – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Argumentative Essay 1 due

Wednesday, September 25th – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Friday, September 27th – Hobart’s “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without it”

Monday, September 30th – Hobart’s “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without it”

Wednesday, October 2nd – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

Friday, October 4th – NO CLASS...Homecoming

Monday, October 7th – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

SWA 2 due

Wednesday, October 9th – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

Friday, October 11th – Catch up day

Monday, October 14th – Discussion of Argumentative Essay 2 and Midterm

Wednesday, October 16th – **Midterm**

Meta-Ethics

Friday, October 18th – Shafer-Landau’s “Ethical Relativism”

Recommended reading: Satris’ “Student Relativism”. He argues that people frequently invoke relativist ways of speaking to avoid critically thinking through or discussing difficult or controversial issues. When such talk isn’t theoretically grounded, which it usually isn’t, it’s vacuous and should be avoided.

Monday, October 21st – Shafer-Landau’s “Ethical Relativism”

*****Argumentative Essay 2 due*****

Wednesday, October 23rd – Harman’s “Ethics and Observation”

Friday, October 25th – Harman’s “Ethics and Observation”

Monday, October 28th – Bennett’s “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn”

Wednesday, October 30th – Bennett’s “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn”

Friday, November 1st – Hills’ “Faultless Moral Disagreement”

Monday, November 4th – Hills’ “Faultless Moral Disagreement”

*****SWA 3 Due*****

Wednesday, November 6th – Hills’ “Faultless Moral Disagreement”

Friday, November 8th – Catch up day

Monday, November 11th – NO CLASS...Veteran’s Day

Wednesday, November 13th – Argumentative Essay 3 Discussion

Philosophy of Religion

Friday, November 15th – Aquinas’ “5 Ways of Proving God’s Existence”

Monday, November 18th – Aquinas’ “5 Ways of Proving God’s Existence”

*****Argumentative Essay 3 Due*****

Wednesday, November 20th – Rowe’s “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”

Friday, November 22nd – Rowe’s “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”

Monday, November 25th – Rowe’s “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”

Wednesday, November 27th – NO CLASS...Thanksgiving Break

Friday, November 29th – NO CLASS...Thanksgiving Break

Monday, December 2nd – Catch up day/Review for Final Exam

*****SWA 4 due*****

Wednesday, December 4th – **Final Exam**