# COMPLETE COURSE SYLLABUS
# PHI 2010 Fall 2019

Contents



Appendix:

# INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

This course is taught by Dr. Elizabeth Palmer, assisted by Teaching Assistants Janelle Gormley, Rusong Huang, and Hana Mitchell

**OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

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|---|---|
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The material in this course is the result of collaborative work by a number of faculty from the Department of Philosophy. Several of the recorded lectures are delivered by faculty who are not teaching the course this semester. To be clear: **Dr. Elizabeth Palmer** is the instructor for this course and has authority over how the course is run this semester. When you have questions or concerns, you should contact either Dr. Palmer or one of the Teaching Assistants, not any of the other faculty who might appear in the lectures.

Office hours are times set aside so that the instructor and/or the teaching assistants are available for you to ask questions, discuss material, and so on. *You do not need special appointments to show up for office hours!* During those times, we will be available both in person (in the offices listed above) and virtually, through the Canvas "conferences" feature.

Throughout the semester you will be part of a group of up to 20 students for the purpose of group discussion online. Each group is assigned a specific Teaching Assistant who will be the person usually (not necessarily always) responsible for (lightly) monitoring the group's discussion board as well as grading the work of students in that group. The TA assigned to your group will also serve as your primary contact, though you should always feel free to contact Dr. Palmer as well. Office hours are spread out throughout the week to give you the most options for getting help, and you should not feel limited to meeting only with the TA assigned to your group.

# COURSE OVERVIEW



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**Course description**

The patient and thorough exploration of philosophical questions is an ideal way to develop skills in clear writing and critical thinking. This course introduces the discipline of philosophy with a focus on developing those skills. Most of the semester is devoted three traditional issues: (a) What is knowledge? What can we know? (b) What is free will? Is there reason to think we don't have any free will? (c) What is morality all about? Are there facts about what is morally right and wrong? At the end of the semester, we will more briefly explore some famous questions about happiness and the meaning of life. The emphasis throughout is on writing clearly about such elusive questions and presenting good reasons to endorse one answer over another.

This is an entirely online course. Because there is no regular meeting time during which we all meet to discuss the material, it is especially important to keep up with all assignments, to participate in discussion boards, and to ask for help when needed. While the structure of assignments is designed to ensure that students challenge themselves, it is also designed so as to minimize the amount of stress placed on any particular assignment. Success requires regular and serious effort throughout the semester.

*A word of caution*: online courses seem to have a reputation for being easier than face-to-face courses. Whatever the source of this reputation, there is a way in which online classes are actually *more challenging*. In a face-to-face course, since the class has a regular meeting time, those meetings help keep you on track. But in the online environment, it is all too easy to lose focus and get far behind. We strongly recommend that you set up your own regularly scheduled "class times" at home—for reading, watching lectures, doing assignments—and stick to them.

**Required texts**

No book purchases are required, as all readings are made available as PDF files online through the Canvas system. The complete set of readings, with links to each, can be found on the *Readings List* page online.

**Course structure**

This course is broken up into five units as follows:

1. Introduction to Philosophy and Argumentation (2 sections)
2. Knowledge and Skepticism (3 sections)
3. Free Will (4 sections)
4. Meta-Ethics (4 sections)
5. Happiness and Meaning (2 sections)

The first and last units are shorter, lasting only two weeks each. The course is organized so that the introductory and concluding units are not as much work as the middle three, which is where you will do most of the hard work.

Each section (lasting one week) is designated by a number indicating the unit and the week in that unit; for example, "3.4" is the fourth section in the third unit. Some of the assignments and materials associated with a particular section are named using that same convention; for example, "Comprehension Quiz 2.2" is the Comprehension Quiz for section 2 of unit 2.

For most sections there are some assigned readings (available as PDFs) and video lectures commenting on the readings, providing background information, or the like. Nearly every video lecture is accompanied by a downloadable PDF file ("Slides and Notes") which includes all the PowerPoint slides used in the lecture and a set of notes on those slides corresponding roughly to the recorded lecture. They are not exact transcripts but can serve as handy notes for review after listening to the recorded lecture. Look for a small "**SN**" (for "Slides & Notes") next to the lecture links; that will link you to the PDF file.

In addition to reading various materials and watching various recorded lectures, assignments include one logic exercise for section 1.2, five unit tests, required participation through group discussions for each section, and two kinds of graded writing assignments: Short Writing Assignments and longer Argumentative Essays ("SWAs" and "AEs" for short).

There is also a mandatory Syllabus Review Quiz that you must take and pass before moving on in the class. Passing requires a perfect score, but you are allowed to retake the quiz as often as you need to pass. You will not be able to access any of the assignments until you pass that quiz, so you want to review the syllabus and take that test as early as you can.

The Argumentative Essays are worth the most in determining your course grade; you are expected to put serious time and effort into these. In order to make that possible, those units that require an AE include a special "Essay Week." No new materials are introduced during an Essay Week; instead, your main job is to work on that essay. Each such week includes a special Essay Week discussion board which you are encouraged (but not required) to use in ways that should help you come up with ideas for your Argumentative Essay.

Finally, there is a kind of very short Comprehension Quiz for each section with new material. These quizzes are optional and they don't affect your grade at all, but they should help you in checking your understanding and preparing for the later unit test.

**Schedule and regular routine**

The particular schedule with details for the current semester is available as a PDF file you can download. It is recommended you use a copy of that to consult throughout the semester in addition to using the calendar generated automatically on Canvas.

While you should pay attention to the detailed schedule to make sure you are on track throughout the semester, the course is designed to follow a regular pattern insofar as possible. During a regular week (one that isn't an Essay Week) the routine is as follows:

| Monday and Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | NEXT Monday |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Read & watch assigned material. | Discussion board: contribute an appropriate question before 11:59 PM. Discuss those questions with your classmates. | Vote on Questions: use the "like" function to indicate which questions you most want to see addressed.<br><br>Take the optional Comprehension Quiz before the end of the day Thursday. | The question most liked in each group by Friday morning is selected for review by the prof & TAs.<br><br>When assigned: Unit Test opens up at 12:00 PM on Friday. | When assigned: Unit Test due before 11:59 PM<br><br>When assigned: SWA due before 11:59 PM |

During an *Essay Week*, the routine is:

| Monday | Tuesday through Friday | NEXT Monday |
|---|---|---|
| Unit Test due before 11:59 PM | Brainstorm and draft work on your Argumentative Essay.<br><br>Use the Essay Week discussion board to request and suggest ideas, objections, responses, etc. with your classmates (citing them when you use any of their ideas). | Argumentative Essay due before 11:59 PM |

*Break Week*. The week of 11/25-11/29, which includes the Thanksgiving holiday, is a break week for this class. If you like you may use it as opportunity to get ahead of the remaining course work or simply to take some time to breathe and relax.

### *Notes on the first two sections for Fall 2019*

- For most of the course, each week other than a special Essay Week will require you to contribute a question to your group's discussion board by the Wednesday of that week. The first week of class for Fall 2019 starts on a *Tuesday,* however, and merely pushing everything back a week results in other scheduling problems. Instead, for the first unit (sections 1.1 and 1.2) there will be *only one* required contribution to a discussion board, where *both* sections 1.1 and 1.2 are up for discussion, and this will be due by the end of the day Wednesday, August 28th.
- An additional change is that the first Comprehension Quiz (Quiz 1.1), which would normally be available only until the end of the Thursday of the relevant week, will be available a bit later—until Monday August 26th, after everyone has had a chance to review the readings and lectures.

Also keep in mind that the Logic Exercise (based on material in section 1.2) will be due during that second week and must be completed before you post your contributed question to the discussion board for 1.1 and 1.2.

**Learning objectives**

The specific learning objectives of this course may be described in terms of the three categories of content, communication and critical thinking as follows.

- *Content.* Students will become familiar with some of the major questions, positions and arguments with respect to some representative philosophical topics, such as knowledge, free will, and morality. Assessed by all aspects of the course.
- *Communication*. Students will become practiced in presenting clearly and effectively ideas that are controversial and often liable to misunderstanding. Assessed by all aspects of the course, but especially the graded writing assignments (Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays).
- *Critical Thinking*. Students will gain skills in reasoning clearly, writing out arguments, anticipating objections, and investigating difficult questions in a conscientious fashion. Assessed by the graded writing assignments (Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays).

**General Education credit**

This course satisfies the State Core General Education requirement for Humanities as well as providing Humanities credit generally for the University of Florida. As such, it shares the general learning objectives of humanities courses as described below:

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theories 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. (From gened.aa.ufl.edu/subject-area-objectives.aspx)

**Writing Requirement credit**

This course provides 4000 words of credit towards the Writing Requirement at UF. 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. (More information on UF's Writing Requirement can be found at catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-requirement.aspx)

As a matter of university policy, you receive, in addition to the course grade, a *separate* grade indicating whether you get WR credit. Passing the course with a C or better is *not automatically enough* to get the WR credit. You must *at least* get a C for the course, but you must also do well enough specifically on written work that is graded for grammar, organization, and so on.

In this class, whether you get the WR credit will depend on certain aspects of your grades for the Short Writing Assignments and the Argumentative Essays. Those assignments are assessed on several different factors; the two that are plainly relevant for the WR credit are Clarity and Mechanics. To get WR credit for this class, you need to earn at least a C average in the Clarity and Mechanics categories on the assignment rubrics. This average, call it the 'Clarity and Mechanics Average', will be determined by your scores in those categories for all three Argumentative Essays and your two overall highest scoring Short Writing Assignments. The overall rule for getting the Writing Requirement credit is, then, as follows:

| **WRITING REQUIREMENT CREDIT** |
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In order to get the WR credit, you need *both* to earn at least a C for the course *and* to earn at least a C on your *Clarity and Mechanics Average*—that is, the average of the Clarity and Mechanics scores for your two highest scoring Short Writing Assignments and *all three* Argumentative Essays.

In order to help you keep an eye on whether you are in any danger of not earning the Writing Requirement credit because of a low Clarity and Mechanics Average, we have built into the assignments an "Informational Item" category with a specific "assignment" called "Clarity and Mechanics." This is not really an assignment, but it is a convenient way to make this information available to you at a glance. The score for this "assignment" at any given point in the class will be your Clarity and Mechanics Average at that point. We will update it manually after grading each Short Writing Assignment or Argumentative Essay.

**IMPORTANT:** Your two lowest scoring Short Writing Assignments are dropped for the purpose of determining your course grade. However, we take into account your two highest scoring Short Writing Assignments after each Short Writing Assignment or Argumentative Essay. This means that a Clarity and Mechanics score for a Short Writing Assignment will figure into the Clarity and Mechanics average until you receive two higher overall scores, at which point the averages for those higher scoring Short Writing Assignments will be used.

- Case 1: Suppose you turn in Short Writing Assignment 2.1 and earn a decent but not stellar grade. Your Clarity and Mechanics Average for that assignment will be part of your overall Clarity and Mechanics average until it becomes one of your two lowest overall Short Writing Assignment scores. At that point – once you've received two SWAs with higher overall grades – the Clarity and Mechanics Average for SWA 2.1 will no longer be calculated into your overall Clarity and Mechanics Average, which will be shown in the Clarity and Mechanics category in the Canvas gradebook.
- Case 2: Suppose you don't turn in SWA 2.1. We will not calculate a Clarity and Mechanics Average for you until we have scores for those categories. In other words, your average will not be updated until after a required assignment has been graded, such as Argumentative Essay 2.3. However, if you fail to submit three or more Short Writing Assignments, a 0 for Clarity and Mechanics will be factored into the average for each missed Short Writing Assignment over and above the two that we drop.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

*Expectations*
*Grade determination*
*Grade scale*

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**Expectations**

As a student in this class, you are of course expected to read the assigned papers, watch the assigned lectures, complete assignments and participate in group discussions. In addition, however, you are also expected to

- be familiar with all policies and requirements as set out in the Complete Course Syllabus
- be aware of all deadlines throughout the semester
- stay informed by keeping up with all announcements made on the Canvas site
- maintain academic integrity in all of your work—or risk failing the entire course
- be respectful of your classmates, even when engaged in lively critical dialogue with them
- inform the instructor promptly of any emergencies or problems that will affect your ability to do what is needed in the course
- ask questions and **seek help when you need it**

If you do these things and make a serious effort, you should be able to do well in the course, especially if you are willing to seek help when you need it. It is important to understand, though, that a grade is meant to record how well you have in fact demonstrated the skills and knowledge the class is supposed to instill; it is not in itself a reward for effort.

**Grade determination**

The course grade is determined by the following factors with the indicated percentages:

| **Kind of assignment** | **# assigned** | **% of course grade** |
|---|---|---|
| *Syllabus Review Quiz* | 1 | Must pass to move on |
| *Comprehension Quizzes (optional)* | 12 | N/A |
| *Logic Exercise (1.2 only)* | 1 | 5% |
| *Unit Tests* | 5 | 15% |
| *Participation (Questions & Group Discussion)* | 11 | 20% |
| *Short Writing Assignments (SWAs)* | 4 | 25% |
| *Argumentative Essays (AEs)* | 3 | 35% |

As you can see from the above, the grades for the Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays matter most in determining your overall course grade. Do not take these lightly; many students are surprised at how difficult it can be to write well about a philosophical issue. Because we recognize this challenge, your two overall lowest scoring SWAs are dropped from calculating the SWA portion of your grade.

**Grade scale**

The grade scale is different from what you are surely used to seeing. Instead of using a scale where an A starts at 92% or 94% or the like, the grading scale in this class is *based on the 4-point scale for letter grade values*, where an A is worth 4 points, an A- is 3.67 points, and so on. Since Canvas uses *percentages* for grades, the 4-point scale is translated into percentages to get the following scale.

| **Letter** | *from* | *to* | | **Letter** | *from* | *to* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 91.75% | 100% | | C | 41.75% | < 50.00% |
| A- | 83.25% | < 91.75% | | C- | 33.25% | < 41.75% |
| B+ | 75.00% | < 83.25% | | D+ | 25.00% | < 33.25% |
| B | 66.75% | < 75.00% | | D | 16.75% | < 25.00% |
| B- | 58.25% | < 66.75% | | D- | 8.25% | < 16.75% |
| C+ | 50.00% | < 58.25% | | E | 0% | < 8.25% |

*Don't let yourself be confused by this scale!* If you see that you earned, say, a 68% on an assignment, don't immediately think that this means you earned a poor grade. A 68% counts as a B. The grades are not curved; they are just determined using this not very familiar scale.

In evaluating particular assignments, we generally use the following way of assigning points:

| Excellent | Good | Adequate | Minimal | Unacceptable |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

An assignment might be assessed using several factors, where each factor is evaluated using this system. One assignment that departs from this slightly is the Logic Exercise, which includes a factor that is either correct (1 point) or incorrect (0 points).

All of the graded work in this class is assessed using the percentage-to-letters scale given above. Each kind of assignment has its own possible maximum in terms of points. The Logic Exercise has a possible maximum of 5 points; Unit Tests have a possible maximum of 10; Short Writing Assignments have a possible maximum of 12; and Argumentative Essays have a possible maximum of 20 points. In each case, the assignment is first graded as earning a certain number of points; this determines a percentage; and that percentage then determines a letter grade using the scale above.

The *course* grade is then determined as follows. The percentage grades for all the assignments in a particular category are averaged together to get a percentage grade for that portion of the course; that grade is then figured into the final course grade by multiplying it by the indicated percentage. That result is then added to the results for the other categories to get an overall course percentage, and that percentage then determines the letter grade in accordance with the scale above. Note that when the individual assignments are factored into the grade for that portion of the course, it is the specific percentage, not the letter alone, that is used.

In accordance with UF policy, a grade of C- for the course is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education or College Basic Distribution requirements. Further information on UF's grading policy can be found at catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx.

# INFORMATION ON ASSIGNMENTS



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**Unit Tests and Comprehension Quizzes**

At the end of each unit you must take a Unit Test. Each Unit Test consists of 10 multiple choice questions and must be completed within 20 minutes. Different students will get different questions as determined in part by a random draw from the bank of questions. The questions cover just the material in the particular unit; later tests are not cumulative.

When a Unit Test is assigned, it becomes available to you at *noon* on Friday of that week and is due by the end of the day the following *Monday*. For units without a special Essay Week, the Unit Test is assigned in the last week of that unit. For units with a special Essay Week, the Unit Test is assigned in the next-to-last week of that unit. This is done so that the Essay Week can be devoted entirely to work on the Argumentative Essay. It also ensures that you have feedback on how well you are understanding the material in that unit ahead of your working on that Argumentative Essay.

The Comprehension Quizzes are optional short quizzes—only three multiple-choice questions each—that are provided for each section of new material. These are provided to give you a way to check your understanding as you go along. They also help prepare you for the Unit Tests in two ways. First, they illustrate the sort of multiple-choice questions you will see on the Unit Tests, so you have some idea what to expect. Second, a few of the Unit Test questions will actually be ones seen before on earlier Comprehension Quizzes, though most will be new.

The quizzes are timed (10 minutes) so as to give you some practice relevant to the real tests. You can only take them once and you will see the correct answers only once after you take the quiz. They are available for a limited time; they disappear at the end of Thursday of the week for that section.

**Participation: questions and group discussions**

Discussion plays an important role in learning how to do philosophy. In discussion with others you can realize how carefully you need to put things so you can be understood; you realize where others have understood the issues differently than you have; you encounter objections from other people that you could not have thought of on your own; you realize how easily you

can misunderstand what others are saying (when they correct you); and so on. So it is a very good idea to engage in such discussion.

For an online course, this means you should make good use of discussion boards. In this course you will be randomly assigned to a group of students for the duration of the semester. These groups will be capped at about 20 each, similar in size to a discussion section of a large lecture course in the face-to-face format. The group will have a separate discussion board for each section of the course devoted to that section's material.

The participation grade is meant to encourage you to make good use of those discussion boards. **For each relevant section, you are required to come up with an appropriate question about the material in that section (readings and/or lectures) and post it to your group's discussion board for that section**. (The relevant sections do not include the Essay Weeks. See below for information on discussion boards for those weeks.) **The question must be submitted by the end of the day Wednesday** of that week (before midnight), and you will not be able to see the discussion board and others' submitted questions until you have submitted your own. *Note that we monitor these boards to make sure that everyone's first post is in fact a question of the relevant sort. If you post something else just to gain access to the board, that will be noticed and your participation grade will be decreased accordingly.*

Once you have access to the discussion board, you should read what other questions students have posted, thinking about which questions are ones you would most like to see answered. You can then use the "like" function to indicate those you most want addressed. You should complete this **by the end of the day Thursday**, since we will, on Friday morning, review each group to see what questions were voted as "most liked" so that we can then address them. A "Questions Addressed" discussion board for each unit will be accessible to the entire class, and the most-liked question from each group will be posted in that space with our comments on them. (If more than one question is tied for the "most liked" in a particular group, just one from that group will be selected to be answered on that board.)

What you are *required* to do is to come up with the questions and post them to the board; at that point your obligation ends. But you are *strongly encouraged* to talk to other students in your group and try to answer each other's questions, both before and after the "voting" happens. Indeed, it is very likely that you will want to do that, since there will be many questions posted on the board that are not addressed on that general discussion board for the whole class; only the one question from each group that is the most liked will definitely be addressed there.

**Participation Grade**

Please note that the quality of your discussion in that discussion board is not evaluated in determining your participation grade. We stress this because we know from experience that students can feel inhibited from speaking up much in online discussion boards, so we want you to understand that the participation grade is not determined at all by the quality of that discussion. **What determines your participation grade is simply whether or not you submit appropriate questions for each of the regular discussion boards**. If you submit an appropriate question for all of them, your participation grade is a perfect A. For each one you *fail* to do, however, your participation grade is decreased by one letter grade, and if you miss four or more, your participation grade is a zero.

| *Questions posted* | 4 (A) | 3 (B+) | 2 (C+) | 1 (D+) | 0 (E) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Number missing* | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 or more |

**Requirements on questions**

While it should be rather easy for you to get a perfect score for your participation grade, the questions you post must meet a few minimal conditions. There are two requirements as described below.

*First, your question must be* ***reasonably specific*****.** That is, it must refer to some particular point in the material introduced that week. You cannot get away with a very lazy sort of clarification question that in effect just asks us to explain something all over again without directing us to something in particular that you are puzzled about. For example, suppose we have just read the paper "The Fact/Opinion Distinction" by John Corvino; the following question is *not* appropriately specific:

> What is Corvino's view about facts and opinions in "The Fact/Opinion Distinction"?

This is too open-ended to be useful. It practically asks us to rehearse the entire paper over again! By contrast, the following is a better question about that paper:

> Why does Corvino reject the definition he considers that says "a statement of fact is one that has objective content and is well-supported by the available evidence"?

Unlike the first question, this one points us to something in particular in the material that we can productively zero in on for discussion. It's helpful to quote or cite some material to help make clear what you're talking about; it's also helpful to provide some explanation of what motivates your question to give your readers some context, which will help us better understand what you're asking and why you're doing so.

If you submit a question that is not reasonably specific, you will receive *a first warning*. If you do it again, your question will not count towards the participation grade.

*Second, your question must fit into one of the categories of* ***Clarification****,* ***Significance****, or* ***Criticism***. When you post your question, you must indicate which category it belongs to. (You can simply put the name of the category at the start of your question.)

- A question in the *Clarification* category is one that asks for help in understanding a specific point or passage in the lectures or readings. For example, you might ask, "Why does Descartes bring up the discussion of a 'malignant demon' set on deceiving him if he doesn't actually think such a demon exists? How could that demon be relevant to his argument if he doesn't think it's real?"
- A question in the *Significance* category is one that asks about how a particular view or argument in the relevant material might have broader significance—that is, how it might have relevance for other things that aren't explicitly addressed in the readings or lectures. For example, you might ask, "If Descartes is right that we don't know anything about the external world, does that mean that we should never trust what science tells us? Does it mean that we should live as if every day is our last day? What difference would it make if he's right?"
- A question in the *Criticism* category is one that proposes a criticism of some argument or claim in the relevant material. For example, you might ask, "Descartes thinks we can't know at the moment that we're not just dreaming everything, but this seems to me false. If I flap my arms right now and don't find myself flying around like in a dream, doesn't that show that I'm not just dreaming?" A small note: if you find yourself presenting a critical remark that isn't in the form of a question, you can turn it into one by asking whether the critical remark you just made was successful.

You may wonder if you are allowed in the discussion board to talk about the questions from the Comprehension Quiz for that section. The answer is *Yes*. Since those quizzes are optional and you get to see the correct answers, there's no harm in your discussing those questions and answers in that space. You can even refer to them in your contributed question for the discussion if you like, so long as you still fit that question into one of the three categories described above. However, those are the **only** test questions you can discuss in the discussion boards. Those questions that only show up on **Unit Tests** may **not** be discussed explicitly on the discussion board. The discussion boards remain available to you throughout the semester, but if you try to use them at any point either to give or to get help on the Unit Test questions, that will count as an attempt at prohibited collaboration and hence as a kind of **academic dishonesty**—and we will treat it as such.

**Logic Exercise**

For section 1.2, there is a special logic exercise assignment; it requires you to identify valid forms of argument and demonstrate through an example how an argument might fail to be valid, explaining how your example does this. Your grade on this assignment is worth just 5% of the course grade.

Because the Logic Exercise is an individually graded assignment and not something you should be talking about with each other in the discussion board for this section, **you are required to hand in your Logic Exercise prior to accessing that discussion board**. Accordingly, make sure to submit your logic assignment early enough to ensure that you make the deadline for your discussion post! Once you hand in the logic assignment, you can post your question to the discussion board for sections 1.2 and then freely discuss the material and vote on the questions you most want addressed.

**Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays**

There are two kinds of writing assignment in this class that count towards the Writing Requirement credit: Short Writing Assignments (SWAs) and Argumentative Essays (AEs). The former require relatively short essays on a variety of topics, while the latter require more substantial essays focused extensively on producing your own argument and defending it against attacks. The two kinds of assignments also differ on how they are evaluated. SWAs are evaluated on just three factors—comprehension of the material, clarity of the writing, and mechanics—while the AEs are evaluated on those and two additional factors as well—namely, the power of the argument you yourself present and your skill in defending your own argument against objections.

The Argumentative Essays are the most weighty assignments in the course. In effect, they are occasions on which you take on the role of the philosopher arguing for your own thesis and defending it with care. Those units that require an Argumentative Essay each include a special "Essay Week" at the end during which no new material is introduced so that you can concentrate on these essays.

**Essay Week discussions**

During that Essay Week, you are *encouraged* (but not *required*) to use a special discussion board for your group; you can use this discussion board to brainstorm ideas with your fellow group members, suggesting arguments and objections to each other. In this way, you are encouraged to collaborate. However, please keep in mind that **if you use any ideas in your own essay that you got from someone else's post in that discussion board, you must cite that**

**person's post as the source of that idea**. Otherwise, you would be taking credit for someone else's idea, which is unacceptable plagiarism—something that will not be tolerated.

When you cite the ideas from others in your group, it should be kept simple. Here is an example of how to do it. Imagine that the following is from an argumentative essay defending the claim that one can know that one is not dreaming:

> I have argued that one can know one is not dreaming by testing whether or not one can do things we know to be impossible, like flying by just flapping one's arms. There's an objection to this argument, however. The objection is that being able to fly by just flapping one's arms may show that one is dreaming, but not being able to fly by just flapping one's arms doesn't show that one isn't dreaming. One can have a realistic dream where one can't do these kinds of things. (This objection was suggested by Amy Classmate on the discussion board on September 22, 2017.) Let me respond to this objection....

**Including the citation in the text in parenthesis** as in the above example is a simple and appropriate way to give your classmate credit.

When you post things to the discussion board for the Essay Week, you should think of it as starting a conversation, not posting portions of a draft of your actual Argumentative Essay. And certainly you don't want to post a complete draft of that essay! (If you did that, your fellow students probably wouldn't read all of it anyway.) Rather, what will be useful for you to post are focused questions about particular claims or arguments. Here's one example of the sort of thing you might post:

> I was thinking of arguing against Harman's "Evidence Requirement" -- the claim that an observation that p counts as evidence that p only if the fact that p helps explain why that observation was made. I think the following example shows that this is false. What do you think? ... [insert example]

Note that while this doesn't talk about the entire paper, just a particular example and how well it might or might not work to attack a particular claim. Here's another example of something that could be useful in the essay week discussion boards:

> I like the argument for skepticism about the external world but feel like the conclusion isn't that big of a deal. So what if we don't really know that we have hands or anything about tables and chair or trees or whatever? We can still trust the results of science to be probably true, can't we? What do you guys think?

Note that this sort of chatty prose wouldn't be appropriate in the essay you turn in for grading, it's perfectly fine for the discussion board where you are just trying to have a conversation and think through these things.

An important side note here: because the Essay Week discussion board is operative near the time you are taking a Unit Test, **access to that discussion board will require you to have already completed your Unit Test.** That test is due by the end of the Monday of Essay Week, so that should leave you plenty of time to use the board even if you wait till near the due date to due the Unit Test.

**Sample Argumentative Essay and Writing Advice Lecture**

In addition to the extra time in the Essay Week and the discussion board for brainstorming with your classmates, we have provided you with a sample Argumentative Essay. It focuses on

material from the first unit and should give you a good sense of what an organized, serious argumentative paper looks like. As the term goes on, we hope to pick out additional samples from current student work to share as examples of excellent writing.

There is also a lecture available to you providing general advice on writing in philosophy classes that you should be sure to review well in advance of the first Argumentative Essay.

**Word counts**

Both kinds of assignment come with a *target word count range*. A Short Writing Assignment should be generally in the range of 300 to 500 words, while an Argumentative Essay should generally be in the range of 1200 to 1500 words. When you hand in your work, you must include at the top of the essay the word count (not including any footnotes or bibliography). However, you should understand these word count ranges as general targets, not hard and fast rules. It is not as if you will automatically lose points if your work does not fit within that range. Rather, you should think of those word count ranges as giving you a rule of thumb for whether there is enough in the essay to do the job you're supposed to do. If your SWA or AE is shorter than the target range, then there is a good chance that you have not developed it enough to do a good job. But you should not add to the essay solely in order to reach that word count range; that is more likely to result in pointless filler than it is to do any good. If your SWA or AE is longer than the target range, then there is a good chance that it is not focused and concise in the way it should be. But you should not remove material solely to get it down to that word count range; that might result in getting rid of valuable material. To sum up:*use the word count ranges as a rough guide for what you should do, but do not be a slave to them*. Instead, *prioritize the quality of the essay* in terms of the relevant criteria: comprehension of the material, clarity, mechanics, thesis support, and defense against objections.

**Dropped grades**

Of the four SWAs, your worst two will be dropped from figuring into your final course grade. We recognize that philosophical writing can be very challenging, especially for those entirely new to the subject, and this policy should help reduce your level of stress. Even if two of your SWAs are a disaster, for instance, you can still get a good grade for the course. However, please keep in mind that to get the Writing Requirement credit, you need to get at least a C on your *Clarity and Mechanics Average*, which is an average that takes into account your two best overall scores for the four SWAs assigned and all of the AEs.

To ensure the highest grade possible, it's a good idea to submit all four – but *at least three* of the SWAs – even if the worst two are dropped. It's also worth noting that three of the four assigned SWAs will precede an AE that completes a unit. These SWAs provide practice and the opportunity for feedback that will be useful to you when writing the AEs.

**Evaluation of SWAs and AEs**

The Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays are the most important work you do in this class. Not only do you (we hope) put a lot of effort into these; your teachers put a lot of effort into assessing them and providing feedback. Review this section for information on the relevant factors and the kind of feedback provided.

**Factors in assessment**

In evaluating the Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays, we use rubrics explaining which factors count and how. For SWAs, there are just three factors that play a role in assessment: *Comprehension*, *Clarity*, and *Mechanics*.

- **Comprehension** is a matter of understanding accurately the material you are writing about.
- **Clarity** is a matter of writing in a way that can be understood others, avoids ambiguity, and is focused and organized.
- **Mechanics** is a matter of avoiding grammatical or formal errors, especially the ones we count as "egregious mechanical errors."

For Argumentative Essays, those three factors are still relevant, but two further ones are added: *Thesis Support* and *Defense against Objections*.

- **Thesis Support** is a matter of providing good reasons to believe the thesis you advance in your essay.
- **Defense against Objections** is a matter of anticipating how someone might object to what you say and defending against those objections.

In the rubrics, each box has a number of statements in it describing the work. If all the statements accurately describe the work, the work should be assigned that number of points for that factor. If some but not all the statements accurately describe the work, the number of points may vary depending on how close the work fits those statements. Each factor has a possible value of 4 to 0 points, following the same 4-point scale described elsewhere.

**Comprehension and grade ceilings**

While several different factors can make a difference to the grade for a Short Writing Assignment or Argumentative Essay, the factor of *Comprehension* has a special role. If a piece of writing shows a very poor understanding of the material, it should not get a good grade, even if the writing is very clear and free of mechanical errors. There is, then, a special rule in place for those cases in which the Comprehension score is less than the "adequate" score of 2.

**COMPREHENSION & GRADE CEILING RULE**

If an SWA or AE scores a *Minimal* (1 point) on the Comprehension factor, then the **entire writing assignment cannot earn a grade better than a C.**

If an SWA or AE scores an *Unacceptable* (0 points) on the Comprehension factor, then **the entire writing assignment cannot earn a grade better than a D.**

Think of these as grade "ceilings": if the comprehension is very poor, the whole thing bumps up against a ceiling: either a C for minimal comprehension or, worse yet, a D for cases where the comprehension is so bad as to be unacceptable. The whole assignment could get a grade lower than the ceiling, but it cannot get a grade *better* than the ceiling.

**Mechanics and egregious mechanical errors**

By a "mechanical error" generally we mean to include errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other things of those sorts. Your score for the "Mechanics" factor on the SWAs and AEs is a function of how well you avoid such errors.

It is not feasible to list all the sorts of mechanical errors you should avoid, and, of course, some errors are worse than others. We aim to motivate you to avoid some of the most common and terrible errors. We have selected nine such errors for this course and are asking you to make a special effort to avoid *these*, at least. They are not the only mechanical errors, of course; nor are they even necessarily the very worst of the worst. We have selected them because they seem to us surprisingly common in student work, but we could have selected others. Our hope is that a relatively short and definite list will be useful as a way of getting students in the habit of avoiding some of the more embarrassing errors.

We are, then, *stipulating* that these nine errors are to be called the "egregious mechanical errors" for the purpose of this course. A separate page online ("The Nine Egregious Mechanical Errors") provides an explanation of each.

The list is somewhat arbitrary, but they are certainly very embarrassing errors. By providing you with this list, we make sure you that know exactly which mechanical errors will count *especially heavily* against your grade in the Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays.

Other mechanical errors will *also* count against your grade in those assignments, but they will not have the same definite impact as spelled out in the rubric. Any mechanical error not in the list of nine will be called a "moderate" mechanical error.

As a general tip, we stress that before you hand in any of these assignments you should rely on your own examination of your work and *not rely on a spellcheck or other auto-correct function*. Those can be useful, but they can also make errors. Relying on them can also make it more difficult for you to spot the errors when they appear.

**Feedback on SWAs and AEs**

When grades are released for your SWA and AE work, you will probably look first to see what grade you received. That is understandable. But you will be doing yourself no favors if you don't *also* look at the other feedback on your work, since that is what you will learn from.

When you review your graded work, you should be able to find

- The grade and the specific marks on the rubric
- A general overview comment for the assignment
- In-text or inline comments on the text itself

Most students will see the first two of these easily, but it is easy to overlook the third. And that would be a very unfortunate thing to overlook. The in-text comments are very important, as they target specific things you say in an attempt to help you gain a good critical perspective on your work. Since it is easy for students to miss those comments, we are here giving you specific instructions as to how to see those and thereby benefit from those comments. Make sure you read that feedback; we provide it so as to enable you to improve, of course, and if you only look at the grade and not at the feedback, you will make things much harder on yourself.

To make sure you know how to see that feedback, see the instructions in the "Technical Support" part of the syllabus. If you have trouble following those instructions or they don't seem to work for you, contact us for assistance. If necessary, it is also possible for us to send you, independently, an annotated PDF file with those in-text comments.

# POLICIES AND RESOURCES



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**Academic honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states

> We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code." On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Honor Code in full can be found at sccr.dso.ufl.edu/students/student-conduct-code/. It specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. **If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or teaching assistants in this class**.

In any academic writing you are obliged to inform the reader of the sources of ideas expressed in your work. Failure to do so is plagiarism. **WE HAVE A ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY MEANS AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE.** This includes not just plagiarism but any conduct constituting academic dishonesty as defined in the honor code, including prohibited collaboration, prohibited use of resources, and so on. Any suspected act of academic dishonesty is reported to the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office prevents students from dropping courses in cases of academic dishonesty. **If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or other academic dishonesty it is your responsibility to get answers. Do not be afraid to ask if you are unsure.**

**We are serious about this**. If you cheat in any way and are caught, you will fail the course. Cheating is an insult to the professor, the teaching assistants, and your fellow students. It will not be tolerated.

**Outside sources**

There are many resources out there about philosophy, including on the internet. We cannot stop you from looking at those sources, but we want to **strongly discourage you from looking at them**. Doing so will probably hurt you more than it can help you. Here's why.

- The variety of material out there is of very inconsistent quality. While there are many sites with good, informed discussion by people who know what they're talking about, there are many other sites about which that cannot be said.
- Even if the site you are reading has high quality material on it, there is a good chance it will be more bewildering than enlightening. Without any help in approaching the material, you could end up much more confused than before.
- If you find yourself browsing through the results of a Google search on the philosophical topics under discussion in this class, you may find yourself tempted to make use of ideas you get from what you found without citing them properly. If you do that, however, that will constitute plagiarism, and you then run the risk of getting an automatic failing grade for the course as stressed above. If you refrain from such browsing, you avoid that temptation and risk.
- Even if you are entirely conscientious and cite everything you use that you find from these outside sources, you might be tempted to do something else that, while honest, is definitely not to your advantage. This is the temptation to lean on the ideas of the outside sources without trying to think through the issues on your own. More precisely, you may be tempted to fill up the paper by explaining someone else's argument, then someone else's objection to it, and then someone else's reply to it, and end with nothing by way of your own contribution. If you write such an essay clearly and show that you understand the issues, it may get a passing grade, but it won't get a good grade. We hope for you to come out of this class with some real skills in both thinking for yourself and being critically rigorous. If you merely assemble other people's ideas, you are not developing those skills.

In light of these reasons, we strongly recommend that you refrain from surfing the net looking for outside help on philosophical issues. If you do look at any outside sources, you must provide appropriate citation, of course. We are not picky about the method of citation, but if you refer to anything that isn't a reading made available here on this Canvas site, you must (1) refer to that source wherever in your own essay you make use of it and (2) include in a "works cited" list information on the author(s), title, publisher, and date of publication. If it is an online source you must provide the URL. For more information on how cite properly, see the resources for basic writing assistance below.

**Drafts of written work**

While you are working on your SWAs and AEs, you may wonder if we are willing to review your rough drafts. The answer is that we will not *look* at such drafts, but we are wiling to *discuss* the drafts with you. You can come to office hours with your own draft and/or notes in hand and talk through with us what you hope to say, how you hope to defend it, and so on. From experience, this seems the most fruitful way for us to help you in the process of writing your papers, in contrast to reviewing rough drafts.

**Basic writing assistance**

You may find it helpful to use the influential guide by Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, available free online at www.bartleby.com/141/.

Another very useful resource is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, also known as the "OWL." It is especially good for getting detailed information on how to cite sources properly. You can find it at owl.english.purdue.edu/.

UF has a dedicate writing program with a "writing studio" that is intended to provide students with several resources for improving their writing. The site includes several resources, including

links to the OWL site just mentioned and other items. You can find that site at writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/.

The writing program provides assistance with writing for UF students, including distance students who are pursuing online-only courses. You can login to tutortrac.clas.ufl.edu/ to make arrangements to meet with a tutor. We must warn you, however, that while those tutors are surely good at helping you avoid certain kinds of problems, many writing tutors are not familiar with writing philosophy papers. What counts as a good paper for, say, an English class might not count as a good paper for philosophy. In philosophy, clear structure and explicit argumentation is at a premium. **If you do meet with a tutor, you would be well advised to share with the tutor the sample argumentative essay** so that he or she knows what sort of paper is needed in this class.

**Make-up policy**

Without legitimate, documented excuses, late work is not accepted. Computer errors (including e-mail or wifi problems) may not be acceptable excuses. For problems that arise too close to the due date for us to make arrangements, leaving the instructor with a message concerning the problem does not obligate us to accept your late work.

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues must be accompanied by the ticket number received from UF when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You must e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

**Disability accommodations**

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive. Hence, you should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

**Course evaluations**

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/.

**Support services**

You should be aware that UF provides counseling and other kinds of help for students in distress. You can call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at **352-392-1575** and see their website at counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/.

The "U Matter, We Care" program provides resources for everyone in the UF community. See the website at umatter.ufl.edu/. Students can contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for

assistance for students in distress. There is also a phone number for this program: **(352) 294-CARE.**

**Online courtesy**

While our intereactions are online, remember that there are real people at the other end of the internet connection. You are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.

**In this class it is especially important that you treat others with respect**. Your task is to be a good listener and help evaluate *ideas* and *arguments*, not to attack or evaluate *people*. Philosophy is not a matter of combat between people; we are all engaged in a cooperative effort to achieve understanding, and while that may mean letting the *ideas* fight among themselves, so to speak, it does not require that *we* fight with each other.

You should be vigorous and engaged in your online discussions with your fellow students, and that includes being critical of the things they say. But you should keep those critical remarks relevant and polite. And remember that you can help as well as criticize: you may note that an argument has a problematic premise, point this out, and then suggest a better one to replace it!

Discussion boards are lightly monitored to watch out for any cases in which the critical back-and-forth degrades into name-calling or other inappropriate behavior. If personal conflicts arise between students in the same group we may move students from one group to another to get around the problem. If you have problems with people in your group, you should feel free to contact the instructor about your concerns.

# TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR PHI 2010 ONLINE

*General technology support*
*Virtual office hours*
*Announcements and archive*
*Accessing in-text comments on written work*

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**General technology support**

The course website is hosted on Canvas, the dedicated e-learning environment for the University of Florida. You need to log in to Canvas here: http://elearning.ufl.edu.

If you have questions regarding Canvas, your internet connection, or any other technology used to support or deliver this online course, please **do not contact your instructors or TA**. Instead, please contact **the UF Help Desk** through one of the following:

- Email: Learning-support@ufl.edu
- Web: helpdesk.ufl.edu
- Phone: **(352) 392-HELP (4357)**

For the make-up policy regarding issues due to technological problems, see the general make-up policy in the Policies and Resources part of the syllabus.

There are several resources online that provide guidance in using Canvas. In particular,

- Canvas Student Orientation: resources.instructure.com/courses/32
- Canvas Student Guide: guides.instructure.com/s/2204/m/4212
- Canvas Guides in general: guides.instructure.com/

Be sure that your notifications preferences are appropriately set. See the Notification Help page (guides.instructure.com/m/4212/l/73162-how-do-i-set-my-notification-preferences) for students. It is recommended that you have the notifications for announcements and invitations be set for "Notify me right away."

Other resources aimed at students taking UF courses from a distance are available at www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help.

In addition, there is a General UF Resources page linked to on the Canvas site that includes many resources relevant to online learning.

**Virtual office hours**

To use virtual office hours, take a look at the links on the left margin of the course website. You'll see one called "Zoom Conferences". When we hold office hours, we create a "conference" through this feature and invite everyone in the class. This invitation means that you can "join" the conference electronically and interact with us online. Several people can meet at once.

When office hours are being held and a conference is set up in this way, there are three ways for you to join electronically. (1) An email will be sent to your UF email address via Canvas announcing the Zoom Meeting. Once you open this email, you can click on the link following "Join URL." (2) The meeting will also appear as an event on your e-learning calendar with a link to the conference that you can click on. (3) You can also go directly to Canvas and click on the

link to the left that says "Zoom Conferences." Make sure that "Upcoming Meetings" is blue, then find an ongoing meeting under "Topic" during scheduled office hours. Click "Join."

When joining a conference, a window browser will open with the Zoom meeting, and you'll then have to choose whether to use your computer or your phone for audio.

Additional help on joining a zoom conference through Canvas can be found at https://elearning.ufl.edu/media/elearningufledu/zoom/How-to-Join-a-Meeting.pdf.

**Announcements and archive**

When you log in to Canvas, you should see any and all announcements from your online class sites. If there is a new announcement you have not read, make sure you read it! That may seem obvious, but we want to emphasize doing this so that you keep on top of the course. Announcements might include information that you really don't want to miss out on. For instance, if we hear that a particular assignment is causing confusion among students, we may post an announcement clarifying that assignment. They may also include links to additional materials designed to help you do better in this class. So be sure to pay attention to those announcements.

Instead of having announcements linger on the "announcements" page for the entire term, after a few days or so announcements will be removed. Some announcements will include things that you will want to be able to go back to later, however, such as links to samples of good student work that we provide to you during the term or documents that provide additional comments on the material to improve everyone's understanding. A separate discussion board called "Links Archive" is maintained where that material is stored for the entire term so you can return to it at any point later in the course.

**Accessing in-text comments on written work**

Here's what you should do to see the "in-text" (or "inline") feedback on those assignments:

1. Click on the Assignments tab located on the left of the Canvas website
2. Select the Short Writing Assignment or Argumentative Essay you would like to view.
3. You will see a screen with a link "Submission Details" on the right. Click on that.
4. On the next screen you will see a link (upper right corner) that says "View Feedback." Click on that.
5. You will then have a preview of the graded work with our in-text comments. You can look at it there or download it, using the link on the upper left corner. We recommend downloading it and opening it separately; it should be much easier to read that way. The download will be a PDF file with the comments. (Make sure you are able to view comments in your PDF reader.)

For additional help on seeing the in-text comments can be found at community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10542-4212352349.

# The Nine Egregious Mechanical Errors

The following nine mechanical errors are especially bad and unfortunately common. Errors of this sort will count especially heavily against your grade for your Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essays. Do your best to make sure you avoid them!

**1. Confusing its and it's**

Its is a possessive, while it's is a contraction, short for it is.

*The business did well because its CEO actually concerned herself with customer service.*

*It's surely going to rain soon.*

**2. Confusing your and you're**

Your is a possessive, while you're is a contraction, short for you are.

*Where did you put your keys?*

*You're going to have to study harder.*

**3. Confusing lose and loose**

Lose is a verb: to lose is to fail to win or to cease to possess something. Loose is often an adjective opposite to tight; it can also be a verb meaning to untie or set free.

*If you invest in this stock, you can't lose!*

*I like the way this dress looks, but it is just too loose to be comfortable.*

*When the intruders came onto the lawn, the hounds were loosed.*

**4. Confusing affect and effect**

*Affect* as a verb means to cause a change, while effect as a noun indicates a change that was caused. Affect can also be used as a noun to mean a feeling, while effect can be used as a verb, where to effect something is to bring that thing about.

*The foolish scientist thought that love could not affect him.*

*One effect of sleep deprivation is a lack of motor control.*

*She was in shock at the news and showed no affect at all.*

*By pursuing his goals over many years without giving up, he managed to effect great change.*

**5. Confusing than and then**

Then indicates an order or consequence, while than indicates a comparison.

*If Jones isn't the murderer, then I have no idea who did it.*

*There was nobody smarter than she.*

**6. Confusing their, they're, and/or there**

Their is a possessive, they're is a contraction short for they are, and there indicates a place or the existence of something.

*All of their possessions were insured.*

*They're going to get in trouble if they keep up this behavior.*

*The book is over there on the table.*

*I keep telling you that there is no Santa Claus!*

**7. Confusing too and to**

Too indicates something that is either an addition or an excessive amount, while to is a preposition that can indicate a place, a relation, or be part of an infinitive phrase.

*Was she at the party, too?*

*That class was just too difficult.*

*He went to Atlanta all of a sudden.*

*She gave the book to her daughter.*

*To be humble is not easy.*

**8. Confusing our and are**

Our is a posessive, while are is a verb.

*Our house is pink.*

*We are going to Atlanta this weekend.*

**9. Writing would of instead of would have (or: could of/could have, should of/should have)**

These are errors due entirely to paying attention only to how certain phrases sound. Saying "he would have done better if he had studied more" can sound like "he would of done better if he had studied more." But "would of" is not a proper construction in English. Similarly, "should have" and "could have" can sound like they use the word "of," but there is no proper use of "should of" or "could of" in English.