

# Theory of Knowledge

## I Course Information

- Course number: PHI 3300.
- Section 03F2.
- Period 3, 9:35 – 10:25.
- Location: Leigh Hall 0104.
- Instructor: Rodrigo Borges
- Office: Griffin-Floyd Hall, room 314.
- Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30am – 12:00 (or by appointment).
- Contact Information: [rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu](mailto:rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu)

*NOTE: it is your responsibility to read this document carefully. This is an agreement between you and your instructor. If you email me about something that is obviously stated in the syllabus, you will either receive no answer or I will reply, simply, "Read the syllabus!" However, if you read the syllabus and you still do not have an answer, then email me with your question.*

This syllabus and other materials for this course are available on Canvas.

## 2 Course Goals

This course will enable students to think critically about some of the central issues in the theory of knowledge.

## 3 Course Requirements

Six different instruments will be used in order to measure student progress through the course. The name of each instrument, and the relative weight each of them carries in determining your final grade is the following; a brief description of each instrument follows.

Assignment	Total Number	% of Course Grade
Outline	1	10%
Argumentative Essay	1	20%
Tests	5	15%
Surprise Quizzes	?	15%
Participation	14	10%
Midterm exam	1	15%
Take-home Final	1	15%
Comprehension Quizzes	14	0%

### 3.1 Attendance and Classroom Policies

Students are expected to attend class and to have done all assigned reading in advance. Failure to do so will adversely affect students' ability to perform well in this course.

Although attendance is not required, it is expected. I will collect signatures in order to keep track of attendance. Moreover, there will be in-class unannounced *surprise quizzes* (see below for details).

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### 3.2 Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be provided through Canvas.

### 3.3 Argumentative Essay (AE)

Students will write one (1) argumentative essay with at least 1,200 and at most 1,500 words. This essay will require your analysis and argument concerning the topics discussed in the course. No outside reading will be required for this assignment. The AE comprises 20% of the final grade.

The AE become available on Monday morning and are due by midnight the next Sunday. See the schedule below for the due date.

It will not be possible to submit a draft in advance or to rewrite your paper for a different grade, although you may discuss with the instructor in advance, during office hours, about the approach and arguments you plan to pursue in your paper. Papers will be submitted electronically through Canvas. A *sample AE* is available on Canvas. The rubric for AE is at the end of the syllabus.

- *Essay Week*: a week during which no new material is introduced and you have extra time to spend working on your AE due by midnight Sunday (see the schedule below for specific dates). Each Essay Week includes a special discussion board that you can use to brainstorm ideas with your colleges, suggesting arguments and objections to each other. In this way, you are encouraged to collaborate. Please keep in mind, of course, 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. You are not required to use this board, but we expect that using it might be very helpful to you in writing a good AE.

### 3.4 Essay Outline

During the essay week, students and instructor will meet to discuss an outline of their Argumentative Essay (see the schedule for specific dates). In this instructor's experience, students who discuss their outline with their instructor avoid most if not all major comprehension and structural mistakes. This is not merely an assignment; it is an opportunity for students to prepare and improve their Argumentative Essay. Instructions on what should be in the outline will be provided in class and through Canvas. This assignment comprises 10% of the final grade.

Students must bring a printed copy of their outline to the meeting. The revised outline is due the same day by 11:59pm.

*Failure to meet with the instructor at the above time, or failure to arrange a meeting at a different time during that week will result in an 'E' for the assignment. It is THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to seek and arrange a different time to discuss his/her outline with the instructor if he/she is not able to meet at the above designated time.*

### 3.5 Outside Readings

No outside readings are required for the completion of the AE. *However*, if you do plan to use an outside reading, you **MUST** check with your instructor whether the particular reading you have in mind is an appropriate source. There are **ONLY TWO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule: (i) your outside reading is an entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; (ii) your outside reading is an entry in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

If you do not follow these instructions on the use of outside readings, you risk seriously harming your grade.

### 3.6 Surprise Quizzes

There will be unspecified number of in-class surprise quizzes. Those will be on the reading assigned for the day of the quiz. There are no make-up surprise quizzes, but none will be given on religious holidays. Surprise quizzes will receive a pass/fail grade. Although, the quality of your answer will not be directly assessed. Only *real answers* will be get a 'pass'. By a 'real answer' I mean something that (at least) tries to help someone wondering about the question in the quiz. Submitting your name, or a message such as 'Sorry, but I don't know the answer' will result in a 'fail'.

Students must take at least 60% of the quizzes in order to receive a perfect 10. For the purpose of grade, 'fail' will be the same as an absence. The point distribution scale is given by the following table:

Proportion of Quizzes	Points
at least 60%	10
60–50%	8
50–40%	6
40–30%	4
30–0%	0

Surprise quizzes will all have the following general form:

State as carefully as you can A's argument that X is the case.

You can consult any notes you took on the readings, or the readings themselves. The quiz will last only 10 minutes and it might take place either at the beginning or at the end of the class.

### 3.7 Comprehension Quizzes

These are optional (ungraded) short quizzes: three multiple-choice questions each. There will be a quiz for each of the regular weeks. They give you a way to check your understanding as you go along. They also help prepare you for the tests in two ways. First, they illustrate the sort of multiple-choice questions you will see on the Tests, so you have some idea what to expect. Second, a few of the Test questions will actually be ones seen before on earlier Comprehension Quizzes, though most will be new. Comprehension quizzes are available for a limited time; they appear Monday morning and disappear at the end of the day Friday.

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.

### 3.8 Tests

There are five (5) tests. Each test consists of ten multiple choice questions and must be completed within twenty minutes. They are due midnight Monday; they become available Friday at noon (see schedule for specific dates). 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 'between' tests. So, test 2 covers the material that appeared after test 1; and so on. Tests are not cumulative. They account for 15% of the final grade.

### 3.9 Participation

The meetings on Fridays will be devoted to discussing the materials in class. That means that you must participate during those classes. Participation will occur in two ways.

1. Discussion boards on Canvas.
2. Group discussion in class.

The participation grade, which comprises 10% of the final grade, is the simple average of the grades for 1 and 2.

#### 1. *Discussion Boards on Canvas*

You are required to come up with an appropriate question about the material (readings and/or lectures) in at least ten (5) different discussion boards. There will eight (8) discussion boards of this type during the term. Questions must be submitted by the end of the day Wednesday (before midnight). You will not be able to see the discussion board and others' submitted questions until you have submitted your own. This excludes the Essay Week.

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 Thursday evening, since the instructor will address the 'most liked' questions on Friday.

The quality of your discussion in that discussion board is not a factor in determining your grade. What *is* a factor in determining your grade is following: whether or not you submit appropriate questions for at least five of the discussion boards. Here's what makes a question an appropriate one.

There are two requirements.

1. *Specificity*: your question must be reasonably specific. That is, it must refer to some particular point in the material introduced that week. You will not get away with open-ended questions like 'What is A's view about X?'

2. *Precision*: your question must fit into one of the categories below. 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.)

- *Clarification*: questions of clarification ask 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 an "evil 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?'
- *Significance*: questions of significance ask how a particular view or argument in a reading or lecture 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?'
- *Criticism*: questions in this category proposes a criticism of some argument or claim made in a reading or lecture. 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?'

If you submit an appropriate question for at least five of the discussion boards, your participation grade is a perfect 10. You lose two point for each question shy of five you fail to submit. So, if you submit four questions, you get 8 points; if you submit three questions, you get 6 points. If you submit less than three questions, you get 0 (zero) points.

You are allowed to talk about the questions from the *Comprehension Quiz* in the discussion boards. However, you are NOT allowed to discuss the questions in the Tests.

## 2. *Group Discussion in Class*

In eight different Fridays (starting on the second Friday) students will be divided into groups of 4–5. Groups will ask one question and a follow-up. Students can join different groups in different days.

Group performance in these discussions will be graded. Groups must meet ALL of the following conditions in order to earn a perfect 10:

1. The group must ask 1 question.
2. The group must ask 1 follow-up question.
3. The question must be relevant to the material, and it must not be a question with an answer easily obtainable from the text (or from the discussion itself).
4. The follow-up question must be relevant to the material, and it must not be a question with an answer easily obtainable from the text (or from the discussion itself).
5. The question must be new (i.e., it must not have been asked before during that discussion).
6. The follow-up question must be new (i.e., it must not have been asked before during that discussion).

If (and only if) groups meet each of these conditions, they will get a perfect 10. If your group fails to satisfy 1 of these conditions, it will lose 2 points. If it fails to satisfy 2 of these conditions, it will lose 4 points. If it fails to satisfy 3 or more of these conditions, the group will fail the assignment.

Unless you arrange to meet with your instructor, you will get a zero for missing class on Friday when there is a discussion.

### 3.10 Midterm

There will be an in-class midterm exam. It is worth 15% of the final grade.

### 3.11 Take-Home Final

There will be a take-home final exam. It is worth 15% of the final grade.

## 4 Grade Scale

See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

	Grade Scale	Grade Value
A	100 - 93	4.00
A-	92 - 90	3.67
B+	89 - 86	3.33
B	85 - 82	3.00
B-	81 - 79	2.67
C+	78 - 75	2.33
C	75 - 72	2.00
C-	71 - 69	1.67
D+	68 - 66	1.33
D	65 - 62	1.00
D-	61 - 60	0.67
E	59 - 0	0.00

## 5 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

- <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

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 TAs in this class. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a

grade of 'E' for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: 'A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.' Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

## 6 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.

## 7 Online course evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

## 8 Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to set up a meeting to discuss anything related to the course. I will hold office hours on Wednesdays 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 (or by appointment). To set up an appointment please email me at: [rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu](mailto:rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu). My office is located in the 3rd floor of the Griffin–Floyd Hall, room 314.

## 9 Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Changes to the schedule will be announced.

### *Week 1: Introduction*

8/21 - Syllabus

- Logic

- Reading: Baronett: Logic

8/23 - Logic

- Reading: Baronett: Logic

- Discussion board 1

- Test 1 becomes available

*Week 2: Reading and Writing Philosophy*

8/26 - How to read philosophy

- Reading: Pryor: how to read philosophy
- Test 1 is due by midnight

8/28 - How to write philosophy

- Reading: Pryor: how to write philosophy

8/30 - How to write philosophy

- Group discussion 1

*Week 3: Is Knowledge Possible?*

9/2 - HOLIDAY (Labor Day)

9/4 - Descartes: the first Meditation

9/6 - Moore: proof of an external world

- Discussion board 2

*Week 4: Is Knowledge Possible?*

9/9 - Dretske: The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge

9/11 - Sextus: The Five Modes

9/13 - Alston: A Defense of Minimal Foundationalism

- Group discussion 2
- Test 2 becomes available

*Week 5: What is Perception?*

9/16 - Descartes: the second Meditation

- Test 2 is due by midnight

9/18 - Locke: Essay Concerning Human Understanding

9/20 - Berkeley: Of The Principles of Human Knowledge

- Discussion board 3

*Week 6: What can one know about God?*

9/23 - Descartes: the third meditation

9/25 - Leibniz: Theodicy

9/27 - Benton, Hawthorne, Isaacs: Evil and Evidence

- Group discussion 3

*Week 7: Essay Week*



9/30 - Work on AE

- Outline meeting

10/2 - Work on AE

- Outline meeting

10/4 - Work on AE

10/6 - AE is due by midnight

*Week 8: What is Knowledge?*

10/7 - Descartes: the forth Meditation

10/9 - Steup: Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology

10/11 - Steup: Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology

- Discussion board 4

- Test 3 becomes available

*Week 9: What is Knowledge?*

10/14 - Gettier: Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?

- Test 3 is due by midnight

10/16 - Clark: Knowledge and Grounds

- Saunders and Champawat: Mr. Clark's Definition of 'Knowledge'

10/18 - Clark: Knowledge and Grounds

- Saunders and Champawat: Mr. Clark's Definition of 'Knowledge'

- Group discussion 4

*Week 10: What is Knowledge?*

10/21 - Midterm Exam

10/23 - Dretske: Golden Gettier: What We (Should Have) Learned

10/25 - Nozick: Knowledge

- Discussion board 5

*Week 11: Is There A Priori Knowledge?*

10/28 - Descartes: the fifth meditation

10/30 - Kant: The Critique of Pure Reason

11/1 - Russell: The A Priori

- Group discussion 5

- Test 4 becomes available

*Week 12: Is There Inductive Knowledge?*

- 11/4 - Descartes: the sixth meditation
  - Test 4 is due by midnight
- 11/6 - Hume: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding
- 11/8 - Hume: An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding
  - Discussion board 6

*Week 13: Is There Memory Knowledge?*

- 11/11 - HOLIDAY (Veteran's day)
- 11/13 - Russell: Memory
- 11/15 - Huemer: The Problem of Memory Knowledge
  - Group discussion 6

*Week 14: Should we Trust the Testimony of Others?*

- 11/18 - Locke: Essay
- 11/20 - Hume: Miracles
- 11/22 - Reid: Inquiry
  - Discussion board 7
  - Test 5 becomes available

*Week 15: Should we Trust Reason?*

- 11/25 - Carroll: What the Tortoise said to Achilles
  - Test 5 is due by midnight
  - Take-home final becomes available
- 11/27 - Miscevic: The Rationalist and the Tortoise
- 11/29 - Hume: Of Scepticism with Regard to Reason
  - Group discussion 7

*Week 16: TBD*

- 12/2 - TBD
  - Take-home final is due by midnight
- 12/4 - TBD

# AE

	Ratings					Points
	2.0 - A	1.5 - B	1.0 - C	0.5 - D	0.0 - E	
General Understanding	Overall, the text does an excellent job of responding to the topic question and reflects a more than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	Overall, the text responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	Overall, the text provides a merely sufficient response to the topic question and reflects a less than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	Overall, the text only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class.	Overall, the text does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class.	2.0
Clarity	The main ideas are clear and convincing. The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow.	The main ideas are for the most part clear and convincing. The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow.	The main ideas are only partially clear and convincing. The argument is difficult to follow in places.	The main ideas are only marginally clear and convincing. The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete.	It is unclear what the main ideas are supposed to be. The argument is very difficult to follow.	2.0
Relevance	All the content supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material.	Almost all the content supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material.	The content generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material.	The content tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material.	How the content is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, and there is far too much irrelevant material.	2.0
Interpretation	The claims are all well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	The claims are generally well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	Only some of the claims are well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	None of the interpretations on which claims are based are cogent.	None of the claims are based on interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	2.0
Grammar	There are no egregious grammatical errors. There are only a few moderate grammatical errors, if any.	There are no egregious grammatical errors. There are some moderate grammatical errors but not so many as to be a distraction to the reader.	There are at most two egregious grammatical errors. There are some moderate grammatical errors but not so many as to be a distraction to the reader.	There are at most four egregious grammatical errors. There are many moderate grammatical errors, but they do not affect the majority of the text.	There are four or more egregious grammatical errors. A majority of the text is afflicted with moderate grammatical errors.	2.0
Thesis Support	There is an easily located thesis in the essay that takes an evaluative position towards one of the topics in the prompt. The main thesis is	There is an easily located thesis in the essay that takes an evaluative position towards one of the topics in the prompt. The main thesis is supported by a	There is an easily located thesis in the essay that takes an evaluative position towards one of the topics in the prompt. The main thesis	There is an easily located thesis in the essay that takes an evaluative position towards one of the topics in the prompt. The main thesis	Either there is no discernible argument for any appropriate main thesis or any such argument is so	2.0

	supported by a discernible argument. The argument is original to the student author and not just a rehash of an argument presented in readings or lecture. The argument has significant merit.	discernible argument. While the argument may be mostly a matter of using ideas in the readings and lectures, it makes use of those ideas in an intelligent way. The argument has some merit.	is supported by a discernible argument. While the argument may be mostly a matter of using ideas in the readings and lectures, it makes use of those ideas in an intelligent way. The argument has some merit but would have been significantly better if more seriously developed.	is supported by a discernible argument. The argument can, with some effort, be seen as relevant to the main thesis, even if only partially or in a confused way. The argument might have some merit if more seriously developed.	lacking in merit and relevance that it cannot be worked into any argument worth considering.	
Defense Against Objections	The paper includes consideration of serious potential objections to the thesis of the paper. The considered objections include any that should be obvious to anyone familiar with the material. Objections are addressed at sufficient length as to make clear what the response is supposed to be. The responses are relevant to the objections considered and show a good understanding of the issues at hand. The objections and/or responses exhibit some original thinking. The responses have significant merit.	The paper includes consideration of serious potential objections to the thesis of the paper. The considered objections include any that should be obvious to anyone familiar with the material. Objections are addressed at sufficient length as to make clear what the response is supposed to be. The responses are relevant to the objections considered but may show some lack of understanding of the issues at hand. The objections and/or responses exhibit some original thinking.	The paper includes consideration of serious potential objections to the thesis of the paper. The considered objections include any that should be obvious to anyone familiar with the material. Objections are addressed at sufficient length as to make clear what the response is supposed to be. The responses are at least somewhat relevant to the objections considered, though they show some lack of understanding of the issues at hand. The objections and/or responses exhibit some original thinking.	The paper includes consideration of serious potential objections to the thesis of the paper. The considered objections fails to include one or more objections that should be obvious to anyone familiar with the material. Objections are addressed but not at sufficient length to make clear what the response is supposed to be. The responses are not actually relevant to the objections.	The paper either fails to anticipate any potential objections to its own thesis or there is no serious effort at responding to the objections anticipated. Responses to objections are hasty, careless or entirely without merit.	2.0