

**PHI 2010 (18566) Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2020**

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Palmer
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Virtual office hours: MW 9:30-10:30
Class (via zoom): MWF 8:30-9:20

Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to introduce you to philosophy. Philosophers ask many questions about the fundamental nature of reality and our place in it. Among those many questions are: What is knowledge? Do we have any knowledge of the external world? Do we have free will? What does free will require? Does God exist? In this class, we'll try to get clearer about these questions by considering some of the major issues that arise when we try to answer them. We will do so by critically evaluating some key philosophical texts and arguments in the areas of epistemology (theory of knowledge) and metaphysics (the study of ultimate reality). Towards the end of the semester, we'll use some fictional pieces as a springboard for an informal discussion about ethics.

Philosophers seek answers to their questions through rational argument; it's also important to highlight the profundity of these issues concretely so that we better understand how philosophical concerns integrate with our ordinary lives. To achieve these two aims, we'll start by focusing on the nature of arguments and some basic logic, which will form the foundation upon which we evaluate the arguments we will encounter later in the class. We shall also weave some short stories into our discussions of the philosophical issues.

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

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

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

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

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: **CONTENT** – students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline; **COMMUNICATION** – students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline; and **CRITICAL THINKING** – students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

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

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

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

Required Texts

- Morrison, Toni. 2007. *Beloved*. Vintage International. ISBN-13: 978-1400033416; ISBN-10: 1400033411.
If you already have a copy, feel free to use it. If not, you might want to get the edition noted above, which I'll be working from.
- Various readings on Canvas, accessible in the 'Readings' folder, located in the 'Files' folder.

Recommended texts and resources

On writing well generally:

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

The full text can be found here:

<https://faculty.washington.edu/heagerty/Courses/b572/public/StrunkWhite.pdf>

On writing a philosophy paper:

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

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

University Writing Program:

The writing service offers one-on-one service with a tutor who will help students learn to become better writers and editors. It is free for all current UF students. Please see

<https://writing.ufl.edu> for more information.

For fun:

You might also want to get a copy of Ted Chiang’s *Exhalation*. We’ll be reading a short story and a novella from it. All of the stories are excellent, and I highly recommend the collection.

Chiang, Ted. 2019. *Exhalation*. Alfred A Knopf: New York. (ISBN: 978-1-101-94788-3)

Evaluation

- Logic exercise, worth 5% of your course grade. Due Monday, September 14th at 8 am.
 - Discussion Board Posts (DBPs), worth 15% of your course grade, associated with the assigned readings for the course. These should be approximately 50-400 words each depending on the task, and you should expect at least one of these for each reading (approximately 1-2 per week).
 - DBP assignments will be assigned via Canvas by noon on the day of the class before the class for which they are due. E.g. if a DBP is due for our meeting on Friday, September 11th, the topic will be assigned via Canvas by noon on Wednesday, September 9th.
- Discussion posts figure into the course grade in two ways:
- I’ll select two of your posts at random to grade, and each graded post will constitute 5% of your course grade (for a total of 10%).
 - Posts not selected for grading will count towards participation, worth 5% of your course grade. You’ll begin the semester with the full 5%. You may miss one post without penalty. Each further missed post will result in a 1% penalty deduction in this category: e.g. one missed post would give a student 4/5; two missed posts would result in 3/5; etc.
- 2 Short writing assignments (SWAs), each approximately 400-600 words long. Each SWA is worth 10% of your final grade; combined they total 20%.

- 3 SWAs will be assigned. *You are only required to submit 2, but you may choose to submit all three. Only your two highest scores will count towards your grade.*
- Due dates for SWAs are as follows: SWA 1 is due Monday, September 28th at 8 am; SWA 2 is due Wednesday, October 21st at 8 am; SWA 3 is due Wednesday, December 9th at 8 am.
- 3 Argumentative Essays (AEs), each approximately 1200-1500 words long. The first is due Monday, October 12th at 8 am, the second is due Friday, November 6th at 8 am, and the third is due Monday, November 30th at 8 am. Each AE worth 20% of the course grade. AEs combined equal 60% of the final course grade.

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

Writing Requirement

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

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

A word on Discussion Board Posts:

You should expect one Discussion Board Post assignment per reading. These are designed to satisfy three desiderata: (i) to provide you with questions that will help guide your reading, (ii) to give you opportunities to practice your writing and argumentative skills in a low stake environment, and (iii) to give you the opportunity to discuss your

ideas with one another.

To promote discussion amongst you, I'll put you into small groups. Only those in your group will be able to see your discussion board posts. *I strongly encourage you to comment on each other's ideas.* Let someone know what you think about what s/he has said; let each other know if you agree or disagree with what's been said and why you do so. And, if someone provides helpful feedback, feel free to revise your thoughts and to submit another post before the due date. *Just be sure to cite the person who provided the feedback and to indicate which post you would want to be graded.*

Further things to note:

- (1) You will frequently be assigned a new writing assignment very soon after turning another one in. Don't let this stress you out. The point is to provide you as much time as possible to work on the assignments and to better balance your other commitments.
- (2) No assignment will be accepted after its due date without penalty except by 24-hour prior arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, or a **documented** university approved excuse. UF's policy can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1516/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.
 - The penalty for late writing assignments is as follows: points equaling a full letter grade deduction will be subtracted from your grade *for each day the assignment is late*. Lesser deductions will apply to assignments turned in less than 24 hours after the due date. *No writing assignment will be accepted 4 days after the due date.*
 - Late discussion posts for which a student cannot provide a documented excuse will not be accepted.
- (3) All papers will be submitted through Canvas and subject to anti-plagiarism detection via Turnitin software. Furthermore, I've discovered numerous cases of plagiarism that Turnitin has missed. Students found plagiarizing will receive a minimum of 0 for the assignment and possibly an 'E' for the course. See the section on Academic Dishonesty for more. If you have any questions about how to cite properly, don't hesitate to get in touch. I'm happy to assist you.
- (4) I strongly recommend that you **not** use outside sources for any of the writing assignments. This is for four reasons.
 - a. Grades for writing assignments have a Comprehension component that requires you to show proficiency with the course material, specifically the texts assigned for class and the information conveyed in lecture and discussion. Students who rely on outside sources frequently fail to properly focus on this information, and their grades suffer as a result.
 - b. Some students are tempted to use outside sources when they're having difficulty understanding the material. However, if you find yourself in this situation, outside sources frequently don't help. This is because many of these sources are professional and are pitched at a different audience. So you may find them more confusing than helpful, which will affect your writing. Although I don't want to dissuade you from looking at other sources for your

edification, please be careful and don't hesitate to discuss the material or your ideas with me. I'm here to help.

- c. Although there are many reputable sources, others – especially online sources – are not particularly trustworthy. It can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not without already being very familiar with the material.
- d. There is a higher risk of inadvertently plagiarizing. When writing, it's good to be focused on the ideas and lines of argument. But it's also easy to lose track of the sources of your information and to fail to cite when you should. If this happens with class material, then I know where the information is coming from, and there's usually little concern that you're representing someone else's work as your own. However, this is not the case with outside sources. If you fail to identify an outside source, then, whether you intend to or not, you *are* representing someone else's work as your own, and that's plagiarism. See the section of the syllabus on Academic Dishonesty for more on this.

Course Policies

Attendance: This is a synchronous course; as such, classes will not be recorded. Regular attendance then is very important. Failing to attend regularly results in missing explanations and discussions about the material and lost opportunities to ask questions, to check your understanding, and to try out potential lines of objections and responses. Students who miss out on these inevitably receive lower grades – often significantly lower – than their classmates who attend regularly.

I keep track of attendance. To mark your presence in each zoom class, please write 'H' in the chat box.

I also ask that that you have your cameras on during our zoom classes. It's easier to engage if you can see people when you're talking to them.

Electronic Devices: For your own sake, during class, I ask that you keep all non-class related windows minimized, not look at email, or use your phones for anything that is not class related. This will help you pay better attention, which will improve your class performance.

Tardiness: As a courtesy to your classmates and me, please be on time. Should you be late, you're still welcome and encouraged to attend. However, if tardiness becomes problematic or habitual, I reserve the right to institute a waiting room for our classes and to let people in only when convenient.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified

when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Dishonesty

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

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

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

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.” (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>)

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

CANVAS E-learning Environment

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

- Check the 'Readings' link in the 'Files' tab for all readings.

- Check the 'Assignments' tab for the Logic Exercise, DBPs, SWAs and AEs topics and directions.
- Check the 'Announcements' tab in the e-Learning environment for new course content.

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

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. This class supports the needs of different learners; it is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester. Please do not hesitate to me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed.

The Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/> 352-392-8565) helps to provide an accessible learning environment for all by providing support services and facilitating accommodations, which may vary from course to course. Once registered with DRC, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor as early as possible in the semester when requesting accommodations.

Counseling and Wellness Center

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 <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>.

The "U Matter, We Care" program provides resources for everyone in the UFcommunity. 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**.

Meetings and Readings Schedule

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

Note: This schedule is only tentative and subject to change. We may go faster with the result that readings are moved up, but it's more likely that we'll end up moving more

slowly through the material. If you have any questions about what you should be reading for the next class or on due dates, please contact me.

Note: DBP assignments are **not** included in the schedule below in order to allow lecture and discussion flexibility. As mentioned, you can expect to be assigned 1 per reading (which will amount to approximately 1-2 per week). Each will be assigned via Canvas by noon on the day of the class before the class for which they are due. E.g. if a DBP is due for our meeting on Friday, September 11th, the topic will be assigned via Canvas by noon on Wednesday, September 9th***

Introduction

Week 1:

Monday, August 31st – Introduction

Wednesday, September 2nd – Beardsley’s and Beardsley’s “What is Philosophy?”

Friday, September 4th – McCarty’s “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

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

Week 2:

Monday, September 7th – Labor Day...No class

Wednesday, September 9th – McCarty’s “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

Friday, September 11th – McCarty’s “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

Epistemology

Week 3:

Monday, September 14th – Bonjour’s SEK Sections, 1.1-1.2

Logic Exercise due

Wednesday, September 16th – Bonjour’s SEK Sections, 1.1-1.2 and Haack’s “Epistemology: who needs it?”

Friday, September 18th – Haack’s “Epistemology: who needs it?”

Week 4:

Monday, September 21st – Descartes’ *Meditation 1*

Wednesday, September 23rd – Descartes’ *Meditation 1*

Friday, September 25th – SWA 1 Discussion

Fiction related to external world skepticism: Pollack’s “A Brain in a Vat.”

You might also enjoy Wertenbaker’s “The Chamber of Life.”

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25862/25862-h/25862-h.htm>. Movies dealing with this theme include *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show*, and *Inception*.

Week 5:

Monday, September 28th – Moore’s “Certainty” excerpt; Renee Smith’s “Moore and Descartes meet in a Bar”

*****Short Writing Assignment (SWA) 1 due*****

Wednesday, September 30th – Moore’s “Certainty” excerpt

Friday, October 2nd – Renee Smith’s “Moore and Descartes meet in a Bar”

Week 6:

Monday, October 5th – Catch up day

Wednesday, October 7th – Discussion of AE 1

Free Will

Friday, October 9th – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Week 7:

Monday, October 12th – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

*****Argumentative Essay (AE) 1 due*****

Wednesday, October 14th – D’Holbach’s “On the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Friday, October 16th – Hobart’s “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without it”

Fiction related to Determinism: Ted Chiang’s “What’s Expected of Us”

Week 8:

Monday, October 19th – Hobart’s “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without it”

Wednesday, October 21st – Hobart’s “Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable without it”

*****SWA 2 due*****

Friday, October 23rd – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

Week 9:

Monday, October 26th – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

Wednesday, October 28th – Foot’s “Free Will as Involving Determinism”

Friday, October 30th – Catch up day

Week 10:

Monday, November 2nd – Discussion of AE 2

Philosophy of Religion

Wednesday, November 4th – Paley’s “The Teleological Argument”

Friday, November 6th – Bahm’s “Teleological Arguments

*****AE 2 due*****

Week 11:

Monday, November 9th – Aquinas’ “5 Ways of Proving God’s Existence”

Wednesday, November 11th – Veteran’s Day...No Class

Friday, November 13th – Aquinas’ “5 Ways of Proving God’s Existence”

Week 12:

Monday, November 16th – Rowe’s “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”

Wednesday, November 18th – Rowe’s “The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism”

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

Fiction relating to the Problem of Evil: Dostoevsky’s “Rebellion” from *The Brothers Karamazov*

Week 13:

Monday, November 23rd – Catch up day/AE 3 discussion

Wednesday, November 25th – Thanksgiving Break...No Class

Friday, November 27th – Thanksgiving Break...No Class

Some Philosophical Issues in Literature

Week 14:

Monday, November 30th – Morrison’s *Beloved*

*****AE 3 due*****

Wednesday, December 2nd – Morrison’s *Beloved*

Friday, December 4th – Chiang’s “The Lifecycle of Software Objects”

Week 15:

Monday, December 7th – Chiang’s “The Lifecycle of Software Objects”

Wednesday, December 9th – Catch Up...Last Day of Class

*****SWA 3 due*****