

PHI 2010: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2020 SYLLABUS

Instructor Information:

Mr. James Simpson, MA, simpson.james@ufl.edu

Virtual Office Hours:

Scheduled Zoom Office Hours: M, 8:00am-9:30am, W, 8:00am-9:30am, OBA.

Course Time and Location:

Synchronous Lecture. Recordings will NOT be posted. Attendance is required. Meeting Time: T: 1:55pm – 2:45pm; TH: 1:55pm – 3:50pm.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Content. The course introduces students to philosophy by engaging, in a critical and substantive way, with various readings and arguments, both classical and contemporary, in the history of philosophy. The course will have a four-part structure. The first part will cover the central question in the philosophy of religion: "Does God exist?" We will concentrate on critically examining two rather prominent arguments for God's existence—the ontological argument and the contingency argument—and one rather prominent argument against God's existence—the argument from evil (the problem of evil). The second part of the course will focus on epistemology (theory of knowledge), specifically on epistemic justification, skepticism, and analyses of knowledge. The third part of the course will be concerned with personal identity, free will & moral responsibility. The fourth part of the course will focus on action, meta-ethics—nihilism, objectivism, and relativism/subjectivism—and on normative ethics—in particular, we will examine three ways (utilitarian, deontological, and virtue-theoretical) of characterizing whether or not an action is morally right and standard difficulties that each standard of right action must face.

Method. This course also has significant goals in building skills of philosophical thinking, speaking, and writing.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes.

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.

CRITICAL THINKING: students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Note well, this course fulfills the Gordon Rule Writing Requirement and the Humanities Requirement for General Education. The Writing Requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Required Materials:

Available in the UF Bookstore: Gideon Rosen et al., *The Norton Introduction to*

Philosophy 2nd Edition ISBN: 9780393624427

New: 84.25, Used: 63.25, Rental New: 63.19, Rental Used: 33.70

Note: Some required readings will also be made available on our course Canvas site, under “Files.”

Assessment:

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

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

(1) To do well in this course you must be prepared to engage the assigned material. This includes: keeping current on the reading assignments and being aware of the course schedule and activities as discussed in lecture and posted on the course website. You are responsible for regularly checking your UF email and the Canvas site.

(2) Most people who do well on writing assignments for this course begin writing well in advance of deadlines. You should plan to meet with me to discuss your plans for your papers, and you should expect to write and revise drafts of your essays. However, note two things. First, **I do not read drafts**. I am happy to discuss your paper, help you work through your argument, etc, but I will not be reading drafts. Second, let me disabuse you of a common misconception: **visiting me during virtual office hours doesn't result in an automatic A for any assignment or for the course**. That said, please come to see me during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions or to talk with me about your papers or the course, and feel free to email me with any questions you may have about the content of the course or some administrative aspect of it.

(3) Writing assignments will be on assigned topics.

(4) In grading your work, I will hold you to a standard that assumes you have been doing the readings and coming to class.

(5) In grading your work, I'll be using a grading rubric. The rubric is available on our Canvas site under “Files”.

(6) Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher for the course and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Points:

1. Attendance: 10 points.
2. 2: 15-Q Canvas Multiple Choice and True/False Exams (10 points each): 20 points.
3. 1: 1000-word personal reflection: 10 points. (Submit on Canvas.)
4. 5: 200-word discussion posts: 10 points total (2 points each). (Submit under Discussion on Canvas.)
5. 1: 1,000 word take home essay exam (worth 25 points).
6. 1: 3,000 word take home essay exam (worth 25 points).
 - o Total: 100 points.

Points for all written materials will be posted on Canvas as soon as they are graded.

Late work will be accepted but penalized unless legitimate documentation is provided to me within the appropriate amount of time (see below). For more information about late penalties, contact me via email or visit me during office hours.

Excused absence(s) require documentation be provided to me within a week of the absence(s).

Papers are submitted by uploading a pdf or doc on Canvas.

Attendance:

To get full credit for attendance, you must attend 80% of the classes.

Discussion Posts:

These are short, 200-word posts that will be about the readings from the week the posts are due or the week prior to the week the posts are due. There are no formatting or style requirements for these writing assignments. They will be on assigned topics. These are intended to be fairly straightforward, so there's no reason everyone shouldn't get full credit so long as they satisfy the requirements of the assignment.

Exams:

There will be two exams in this class, both will be taken on Canvas. The first exam will be on the material covered in the first half of the course. The second will be on material covered in the second half of the course. Both exams will be multiple choice, true/false exams. Before each exam a detailed study guide will be provided by me.

Personal Reflection:

The personal reflection will be a 1000-word paper answering one of the following two questions:

Question 1: What is the most serious ethical problem/issue/dilemma that you face or have faced as a college student? How did you resolve or deal with this problem?

Question 2: What do you think is the most serious ethical problem/issue/dilemma that college students face? How do you think students should resolve or deal with this problem?

Some examples of what students wrote about previously:

Not fitting in

Not making friends

Financial stress

Cheating on exams

Lying (friends/family/partner/teachers...)

Racism

Bullying

Sexual misconduct

Homesickness

Drinking & taking drugs

To receive full points for this assignment you only need to turn it in by the due date, meet the word count requirement, and actually answer the question. That's all. It's a very simple assignment.

Essays:

There will be one 1000-word essay and one 3000-word essay. These will be on assigned topics. They will test your understanding of the material and your skill at writing philosophical essays in the analytical style. See the following for an example of a nice undergraduate analytic philosophy paper: <http://fresnostate.edu/artshum/philosophy/documents/ClarkCUPR1-2.pdf> (Links to an external site.). Note well that your paper needn't be of the same quality as this paper to receive high marks, but it should imitate the structure and style of it.

Grading Scale is as follows:

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

Virtual Classroom Conduct:

Do not be disruptive or disrespectful. All conversations should be civil. Virtual backgrounds should be appropriate.

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.

Plagiarism will result, in the very least, in failure of the course, if not suspension or expulsion from the University. So, don't do it.

Students with Disabilities, Student Counseling Services:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Counseling services: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>; 392-1575

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/>.

Writing Studio:

www.writing.ufl.edu (Links to an external site.)

Tentative Schedule (could change depending on the pace of the course):

Part 1: Philosophy of Religion

September 1st: Review Syllabus. Discuss Argumentation and Counterexamples.

September 3rd: Reading: Anselm's Ontological Argument (OA), pages (pp) 8-9 of the Norton. Andrew Chapman "The Ontological Argument for God's Existence" and Bailie Peterson "Attributes of God".

September 8th: Reading: Excerpts from Alvin Plantinga 1974 on the so-called modal ontological argument.

September 10th: Reading Aquinas' Contingency Argument (CA), pp. 13-15 of the Norton.

September 15th: Reading: William Rowe 1970 and excerpts from J.L. Mackie 1984. (discussion post due)

September 17th: Recap of CA and OA. No reading required.

September 22nd: Problem of Evil. Reading: Thomas Metcalf "The Problem of Evil"

September 24th: Reading: Louise Antony and Elenore Stump, pp. 41-57 of the Norton. (personal reflection due)

Part 2: Epistemology

September 29th: Epistemic Justification. Internalism and Externalism. Doxastic and Propositional.

October 1st: Edmund Gettier, pp. 143-45 of the Norton. Andrew Chapman “The Gettier Problem and the Definition of Knowledge”. (200-word discussion post due)

October 6th: Reading: Michael Clark 1963.

October 8th: Gettier Problem cont. No Reading.

October 13th: Reading: Timothy Williamson, pp. 149-155 of the Norton.

October 15th: Reading: Andrew Chapman “External World Skepticism”

October 20th: G.E. Moore, pp. 278-283 of the Norton.

October 22nd: Cartesian skepticism continued.

October 24th: First essay due by 11:59pm.

October 27th: Reading: Pyrrhonian Skepticism—no reading.

October 29th: No class. Exam 1. You have between 8am and 11:59pm to submit the exam.

November 3rd: Reading: Kenneth Blake Vernon “The Problem of Induction”. Jonathan Vogel, pp. 284-291 of the Norton. Nick Bostrom, pp. 442-451 of the Norton.

Part 3: Personal Identity, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility

November 5th: Reading: Chad Vance, “Personal Identity”. November 6th: 200 word discussion post due by 11:59pm.

November 10th: Reading: Jonah Nagashima “Free Will and Free Choice”.

November 12th: Class Canceled. B/c of TS Eta.

November 17th: Reading: Galen Strawson, pp. 600-09 of the Norton; Roderick Chisholm, pp. 610-617 of the Norton.

November 19th: Reading: Chelsea Haramia “Free Will and Moral Responsibility”; Rebecca Renninger “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”; P.F. Strawson, pp. 625-632 of the Norton. (200 word discussion post due.)

Part 4: Action and Normative Ethics:

November 24th: Action Theory. Introduce Utilitarianism. Reading: J.S. Mill, pp. 790-798 of the Norton; Shane Gronholz “Consequentialism”.

December 1st: Utilitarianism cont. No reading. (200-word discussion post due)

December 3rd: Reading: Kant, pp. 800-10 of the Norton; Andrew Chapman “Deontology: Kantian Ethics”.

December 8th: Reading: Aristotle, pp. 813-822 of the Norton; Rosalind Hursthouse, pp. 824-30 of the Norton. (Second take home essay due on 12/11)

December 9th: Exam 2.

Readings in meta-ethics that had to be cut:

Reading: Mackie and Wallace, pp. 850-57, 860-68 of the Norton; Thomas Metcalf “Ethical Realism”

Reading: Quinn, pp. 879-892 of the Norton; Spencer Case “Because God Says So”