

Theory of Knowledge

I Course Information

- Course number: PHI 3300.
- Section 02H2.
- Period 2, 9:30 – 10:45.
- Location: Zoom.
- Instructor: Rodrigo Borges
- Office: Zoom.
- Office hours: M – F 10:45am – 12:00 (or by appointment).
- Contact Information: 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.

2.1 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. Polls and surprise quizzes will be conducted during class (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>.

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. However, the recording will not be shared unless you have a valid excuse. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voice recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the 'chat' feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials by students or any other party is prohibited.

2.2 Textbook

This course does not require a textbook. All readings will be provided through Canvas.

2.3 Outside Readings

No outside readings are required for the completion of the assignments in the course. *However*, if you do plan to use an outside reading in one of your assignments, you **MUST** check with your instructor or TA whether the particular reading you have in mind is an appropriate source. There are **ONLY TWO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule:

1. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy;
2. 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 Course Requirements

Five 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
Surprise Quizzes	?	10%
Tests	5	10%
Polls	24	15%
Writing Exercises	3	20%
Short Writing Assignments	3	30%
Presentation	1	15%

[SEE UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE ON CANVAS FOR DUE DATES.]

3.1 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 be helpful to 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.

3.2 Tests

There are five (5) tests. They are designed to check your understanding of the materials we discuss in class. Each test consists of ten multiple choice questions and must be completed within twenty minutes. They are made available each Friday and are due midnight Sunday (see Canvas 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 only the material covered during the last few classes. The lowest grade will dropped.

If you receive a grade lower than 8.5 for any test, YOU MUST discuss your test with me during office hours before the next test is posted (i.e., the following Friday). Failure to do so will result in inability to take future tests.

3.3 Polls

There will be polls in class throughout the semester. Polls will use the iClicker system. For information on this system, please see

- <https://classrooms.at.ufl.edu/classroom-technology/iclicker-response-system/>

For this class, you will use the iClicker Reef application, either on a smartphone or a computer.

You must register your clicker as soon as possible, but certainly before the first graded poll on Monday 5/17/21. There will be no graded poll in the first week of class, so that everyone can get the application set up. There will be an ungraded poll on Thursday 5/13/21, to allow you to check your clicker is working properly. See the iClicker registration page for more details.

At all times during the term, it is your responsibility to make sure that you have your clicker with you, and that it is working properly. Makeup polls will not be given for clicker problems.

Starting on Monday 5/17/21, there will be at least two graded poll questions in every class. Typically, the first question will be soon after class begins, and the second will be at the end of class. For each question, you will receive two points for a correct answer, one for an incorrect answer, and zero for not answering.

You will receive a poll grade for each class from 5/17/21. Your three (3) lowest scores will be dropped. The remaining scores will each count equally towards your poll grade. Dropping those three lowest scores will allow for occasional absences. Make-up polls will only be given if you have an appropriate excuse that shows you had to miss two or more classes during the semester.

Unless otherwise determined by your instructor, polls are individual assignments. You may not consult other students while taking an individual poll. You may not use someone else's clicker for them, or have someone else use your clicker. These are violations of academic honesty (see below).

3.4 Writing Exercises (WE)

Students will write three (3) short essays (300–500 words) and sample answers will be analyzed in class anonymously (i.e., without the instructor revealing who wrote them). They will receive a pass/fail grade. As with the surprise quizzes, only 'real answers' will receive a 'pass.' By 'real answer' I mean something that (at least) tries to be helpful to someone wondering about the prompt. Submitting your name, or a message such as 'Sorry, but I don't know the answer' will result in a 'fail.'

3.5 Short Writing Assignments (SWA)

Students will write three (3) argumentative papers between 1000 and 1200 words. These are to be narrowly focused, concise, argumentative papers focusing on some issue that has been discussed in class. Topics will be provided. The word count range is just a target, not a hard

and fast rule, though it is unlikely that a good job could be done in less than 1000 words. In terms of grades, the worst grade among the three SWAs will be dropped.

Outside Readings

No outside readings are required for the completion of SWAs or WEs. *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.

Basic Writing Assistance

You may find it helpful to use the influential guide by Strunk and 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.

3.6 Presentation

The class will be divided into small groups of 4 - 5 students. Groups will present on a particular proposition (e.g., 'skepticism is true'). One group will defend the position that this proposition is *true* and another group will defend the position that this proposition is *false*. The goal of the presentation is for students to articulate and defend a particular thesis.

3.7 Discussion (extra credit)

The meetings on Fridays will be devoted to discussing the materials in class. That means that you must participate during those classes. Each *new question* you ask during Friday meetings will earn you 1 point. Each point will go into your 'Discussion Account.' The dividend this account will pay to you will come in the form of extra points at the end of the term. In order to earn a point your question must meet all of the following:

1. The question must be relevant to the material discussed that week;

2. The question must not have an answer that is easily obtainable from the text (or from the discussion itself).

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 Monday – Fridays 10:45am – 12:00pm (or by appointment via rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu).

9 Technical Issues

Please, direct any questions about technical issues you might have to UF Helpdesk. The website is <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>. You may also call them at 352 392 4357.

10 Campus Resources

- Health and Wellness:
 1. U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website (www.umatter.ufl.edu) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
 2. Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (www.counseling.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
 3. Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website (www.shcc.ufl.edu).
 4. University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website (www.police.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
 5. UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website (www.ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

II Academic Resources

1. E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
2. Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
3. Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
5. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
6. Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage ([here](#)) for more information.
7. On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process (www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process).

12 Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

[SEE CANVAS FOR DUE DATES.]

Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

1. Philosophical Tools

5/10 - Introduction and Syllabus

5/11 - Arguments: soundness and validity

5/12 - Arguments: inductive cogency

5/13 - Counterexamples

5/14 - Discussion

2. Knowledge and the Gettier Problem

5/17 - Edmund Gettier: is justified true belief knowledge?

5/18 - Michael Clark: knowledge and Grounds

5/19 - John T. Saunders and N. Champawat: Mr. Clark's definition of 'knowledge'

5/20 - Linda Zagzebski: The Double Luck Account of Gettier Cases (excerpt)

5/21 - Discussion

3. Justification: Internalism vs. Externalism

5/24 - Alvin Goldman; What is Justified Belief?

5/25 - Alvin Goldman; What is Justified Belief?

5/26 - Richard Feldman and Earl Conee: Evidentialism

5/27 - Richard Feldman and Earl Conee: Evidentialism

5/28 - Discussion

4. Skepticism: The Illusion Argument

5/31 - holiday

6/1 - Descartes: the first meditation

6/2 - G.E.Moore: proof of an external world

6/3 - Robert Nozick: Philosophical Explanations (excerpt)

6/4 - Discussion

5. Skepticism: The Regress Argument

6/7 - Sextus Empiricus: the five modes

6/8 - Laurence Bonjour: the structure of empirical justification

6/9 - Laurence Bonjour: the structure of empirical justification

6/10 - William Alston: has foundationalism been refuted?

6/11 - Discussion

6. Presentations

6/4 - Knowledge

6/15 - Justification

6/16 - Illusion Skepticism

6/17 - Regress Skepticism

6/18- Evaluation