

# **Syllabus – Intro to Philosophy**

## **PHI 2010 (section 12858) \* Summer B, 2021 \* University of Florida**

Please read all of this information carefully! The answers to many of your questions lie herein!

**Class: M, T, W, R, F, Period 5 (2:00-3:15) \* Matherly Hall, 113**  
**Office hours: W, R, F, 12:30-1:30 or by appointment \* Griffin-Floyd Hall, 316**  
**Instructor: Schuyler Sturm \* tsturm@ufl.edu**

### Overview

Instead of a “greatest hits” model, this class will attempt to immerse you in contemporary philosophy as it is practiced. The papers we read may be old or new, and they may come from different locations or philosophical traditions, but working philosophers draw from many sources, and this class is an introduction to philosophy both as a topic and as a discipline.

Because philosophy has such a tremendous range, I have had to restrict the focus of the class somewhat, and I decided to select readings that bear upon something that each one of you has probably thought about before: “Who am I?”

The first unit of the class will introduce you to the basics of logic and argumentation, along with the general idea of what philosophy is. The second unit will examine the metaphysics of personhood, asking the question, “What am I?” In the third unit, you will examine your personal epistemological situation by asking, “What can I know?” The fourth unit concerns ethics and the question, “What should I do?” The fifth unit will delve more deeply into identity by examining the attributes that you take yourself to have, asking, “What kind of person am I?” Finally, the sixth unit will draw on some of the preceding philosophical themes as they are presented in literature and politics.

None of the questions raised will be thoroughly addressed, and they will certainly not be answered! Instead, you will be given a taste of the ways in which philosophers try to tackle them. Hopefully, you will be inspired to look more deeply into those questions that are most interesting or most perplexing to you.

### Objectives

After taking this class, you should have a good preliminary understanding of the scope and method of academic analytic philosophy, and you should also have a basic understanding of what makes for a good philosophical argument. This class also fulfills a writing requirement, so you should come out of it having improved your understanding of what makes for clear and convincing writing.

### Structure

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, there will be lectures on the required reading material. You will be expected to have read the assigned material before the lecture about it. There is no textbook required for this course. All readings will be provided as PDFs accessible on the course Canvas site.

Some of the assigned readings will be difficult, but I will provide notes concerning terminology and the concepts and arguments that you should pay most attention to. An experience you will share with every professional philosopher is that of reading something and only sort of grasping it. That's OK! We'll discuss it all together, so you'll never have to figure it out alone. You are strongly encouraged to come

to office hours as often as you like.

On Fridays, we will discuss all the readings of the week in a seminar format, so most of the talking will be up to you. You should come to each Friday seminar with questions, comments, and tirades prepared beforehand. Demonstration of your familiarity with the readings during our seminars will determine the bulk of your participation grade.

Attendance at all lectures and seminars is mandatory unless you are excused. Unexcused absences will affect your participation grade.

If you have any concerns about the class structure or if you have suggestions about what would help you to learn the material more easily, please let me know!

### Honor Code

No breach of the UF academic honesty policy will be tolerated. You are expected to abide by the honor code, as stated here: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student 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 most common type of academic dishonesty in a class like this is plagiarism. When you are submitting written work, the best way to avoid plagiarism is through an abundance of caution. If you even suspect that an idea you are expressing came from someone other than you – whether an author, an instructor, or a fellow student – take pains to indicate its source. If you have any doubts about how ideas obtained from others should be cited, do not hesitate to ask! It is always better to take too much care in citations than to risk plagiarizing.

And that risk is very serious. Punishment for egregious plagiarism can range from a failing grade in the class to suspension or other administrative sanctions. If an instance of plagiarism seems to have been done mistakenly, in good faith, it will still result in significant point deductions on an assignment, and the assignment may receive a grade of zero. Be vigilant!

### General Education and Writing Credit

This class fulfills a General Education requirement in Humanities. Classes that fulfill this requirement should expose students to the history, theories, and methodologies of a specific discipline; they should identify and analyze key elements, biases, and influences that shape thought within that discipline from multiple perspectives; and they should encourage the development of clear and effective reasoning and communication. This course will achieve those goals in the manner described in the “Objectives” section above. Your understanding of the content, critical thinking, and communication will all be assessed through the listed assignments. The course's quiz will assess content knowledge that is relevant to critical thinking, and the writing assignments will assess critical thinking and effective reasoning and communication, in addition to competence with the course content. A minimum grade of “C” is required for the Gen Ed credit to be granted.

This course also satisfies 4,000 words of Writing Requirement credit. Written work that goes toward this requirement must contain extended and coherent analysis, in addition to detailed attention to

technical issues. The writing assignments will be evaluated on content, organization, effective argumentation, style, grammar, and punctuation. The grading rubric will provide additional details. In order to get the 4000 word writing credit for this class, you must get at least a C average on the three writing assignments.

### Assignments

There will be a total of five assignments: one quiz, one draft, and three papers.

The quiz will become available on the first Friday of the class, and it will cover some of the information about logic and argumentation that we will go over in the first week. You will be able to take the quiz up to three times, and your final score will be an average of the scores that you get on each attempt. For example, if you get 45 out of 50 points the first time, then you can just keep the 90%. If you take the quiz again and get a 50 out of 50, then you'll have 95% on the assignment. If, however, you take it again and get 40 out of 50, then you'll end up with just 85% as an overall grade.

A draft of your third paper will be due by midnight on August 1, but you are encouraged to turn it in earlier. We will discuss this in class, but “draft” here is not a precise term: you could turn in a proposal or an outline. Either way, the draft will not be graded, but you will not be able to turn in the third paper at all unless your draft has been approved.

Instructions for the three papers will be available on Canvas. The rubric used to grade the three essays will also be viewable there.

### Grading

There will be 1000 points available, as shown in the table below, and your course grade will be determined based on those points according to the other table.

Letter	Scale	Points
A	4.00	930-1000
A-	3.67	900-929
B+	3.33	860-899
B	3.00	820-859
B-	2.67	790-819
C+	2.33	750-789
C	2.00	720-749
C-	1.67	690-719
D+	1.33	660-689
D	1.00	620-659
D-	0.67	600-619
E	0.00	0-599

Assignments	Points available
Quiz	50
First Paper	250
Second Paper	250
Third Paper Draft	---
Third Paper	350
Attendance/participation	100
Total	1000

### Schedule

06/28/21	Lecture: philosophy as a subject – no readings
06/29/21	Lecture: philosophy subfields and terminology – no readings
06/30/21	Lecture: formal arguments
Reading	SEP entry on abduction (details to be given in class)
07/01/21	Lecture: the structure of arguments
Reading	Jim Pryor, “Writing a Philosophy Paper”
07/02/21	Lecture: review of logic and argumentation – Quiz
07/05/21	NO CLASS
07/06/21	Lecture: psychological or biological personhood
Reading	Amy Kind, “Locke's Memory Theory”, “The Physical Approach to Personal Identity”, and “The Further Fact View” from <i>Persons and Personal Identity</i>
Supplement	*John Locke, “Identity and Diversity” from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
Supplement	*Eric T. Olson, “An Argument for Animalism”
07/07/21	Lecture: dualism and its problems
Reading	Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, correspondence
Supplement	*René Descartes, “Meditation VI” from <i>Meditations On First Philosophy</i>
07/08/21	Lecture: narrative personhood
Reading	Marya Schechtman, “The Narrative Self” from <i>The Oxford Handbook of the Self</i>
07/09/21	Seminar: personhood
Reading	Nāgasena, “The Chariot” from <i>The Questions of King Milinda</i>
Assignment	Essay one instructions available
07/12/21	Lecture: global skepticism and self-contradiction
Reading	Jessica Wilson, “The regress argument against Cartesian skepticism”
Supplement	*René Descartes, “Meditation I” from <i>Meditations On First Philosophy</i>

07/13/21	Lecture: knowledge and factivity
Reading	Catherine Elgin, “Understanding and the Facts”
Supplement	*Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
07/14/21	Lecture: trust and authority
Reading	Liam Kofi Bright, “Why Do Scientists Lie?”
07/15/21	Lecture: decision-making
Reading	Agnes Callard, “Proleptic Reasons”
07/16/21	Seminar: the reliability of knowledge
Assignment	Essay two instructions available
07/18/21	Essay one due
07/19/21	Lecture: the source of ethics
Reading	Sharon Street, “Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?” from <i>The Norton Introduction to Philosophy</i>
07/20/21	Lecture: relativism
Reading	Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One's New Sword” from <i>Heart and Mind: The Varieties of Moral Experience</i>
Supplement	**Jordan Sand, “Mary Midgley's Misleading Essay, 'Trying Out One's New Sword'”
07/21/21	Lecture: consequentialism
Reading	Philippa Foot, “Utilitarianism and the Virtues”
Supplement	*Henry Sidgwick, “The Meaning of Utilitarianism” from <i>The Methods of Ethics</i>
07/22/21	Lecture: Kantian morals and animals
Reading	Christine Korsgaard, “Kantian Ethics, Animals, and the Law”
07/23/21	Seminar: the reliability of ethical thinking
Assignment	Essay three instructions available
07/25/21	Essay two due
07/26/21	Lecture: ontology of race and gender
07/27/21	Lecture: ontology of race and gender
Reading	Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?”
Supplement	*Ásta Kristjana Sveinsdóttir, “The Social Construction of Human Kinds”
Supplement	*Alex Byrne, “Are women adult human females?”
07/28/21	Lecture: religion and transformation
Reading	Helen De Cruz, “Religious Conversion, Transformative Experience, and Disagreement”
Assignment	Essay three draft/proposal due
07/29/21	Lecture: testimonial injustice

Reading	Miranda Fricker, “Testimonial Injustice” from <i>Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing</i>
07/30/21	Seminar: personal identities
08/02/21	Essay topic question and answer day
08/03/21	Lecture: justice and responsibility
Reading	Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
08/04/21	Lecture: current society
Reading	Simone Weil, “Sketch of contemporary social life” and “Conclusion” from <i>Oppression and Liberty</i>
Assignment	Essay three due
08/05/21	Lecture: authorship and authenticity
Reading	Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, author of the <i>Quixote</i> ”
08/06/21	Seminar: philosophy and life