

PHI 2010: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

SUMMER 2021 SYLLABUS

Instructor Information:

James Simpson, simpson.james@ufl.edu

Office Hours:

Scheduled Office Hours: M, 9:00am-12pm, OBA. Griffin-Floyd Hall, Rm. 314

Course Time and Location:

Meeting Time: M-F: 12:30pm-1:45pm. MAT 0113.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Content. This course introduces students to philosophy by engaging with various readings and arguments, both classical and contemporary, in the history of philosophy. This course will have a four-part structure. The first part will cover one of the central topics in the philosophy of religion: arguments for and against the existence of God. The second part of the course will cover various topics in epistemology, with specific focus on the Regress Problem, Cartesian skepticism, and the Gettier Problem. The third part of the course will be concerned with metaphysics, with specific focus on personal identity, free will & moral responsibility, and what objects, if any, exist (e.g., do numbers exist? do chairs exist?). The fourth part of the course will focus on discussion of the three major views in meta-ethics (objectivism, nihilism, and subjectivism/relativism) and on discussion of the three standard normative ethical theories (utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, and Aristotelian virtue theory).

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 4,000 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. While helping students meet the broad learning outcomes of content, communication, and critical thinking, I'll evaluate and provide feedback on students' written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. 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. 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."

Recommended:

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

On writing a philosophy paper: Pryor, Jim. "A Brief Guide to Writing a Philosophy Paper" (2008).

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: 5 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.
4. 1: 1000-word exploratory essay: 15 points.
5. 2: 1,000-word take home argumentative essay exams (worth 25 points each): 50 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 at least 80% of the classes.

Exploratory Essay:

This will be an opportunity for students to write on some philosophical topic that interests them, but that's not directly discussed in class. There are no formatting, style, or structural requirements for this writing assignment. The goal will be to explore some area of interest in philosophy and to write about it an engaging way.

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 part of the course. The second will be on material covered in the last three parts 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.

Argumentative Essays:

There will be two 1000-word argumentative essays. 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

Classroom Conduct:

Do not be disruptive or disrespectful. All conversations should be civil.

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.)

Rubric:

A rubric will be posted on the Canvas course page under “Files”.

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

Part 1: Philosophy of Religion

June 28th: Review Syllabus. Discuss Argumentation and Counterexamples.

June 29th: 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”.

June 30th: Reading: Excerpts from Alvin Plantinga 1974 on the so-called modal ontological argument.

July 1st: Reading Aquinas’ Contingency Argument (CA), pp. 13-15 of the Norton.

July 2nd: Reading: William Rowe 1970 and excerpts from J.L. Mackie 1984.

July 6th: Recap of CA and OA. No reading required. (personal reflection due)

July 7th: Problem of Evil. Reading: Thomas Metcalf “The Problem of Evil”

July 8th: Reading: Louise Antony and Elenore Stump, pp. 41-57 of the Norton.

Part 2: Epistemology

July 9th: Exam 1. No class.

July 12th: Introduce Epistemic Justification. Then: Edmund Gettier, pp. 143-45 of the Norton. Andrew Chapman “The Gettier Problem and the Definition of Knowledge”.

July 13th: Reading: Michael Clark 1963. (exploratory essay due)

July 14th: Gettier Problem cont. No Reading.

July 15th: Reading: Timothy Williamson, pp. 149-155 of the Norton.

July 16th: Reading: Andrew Chapman “External World Skepticism”.

July 19th: G.E. Moore, pp. 278-283 of the Norton.

July 20th: Cartesian skepticism continued.

July 21st: Pyrrhonian Skepticism—no reading.

July 22nd: Jonathan Vogel, pp. 284-291 of the Norton. Nick Bostrom, pp. 442-451 of the Norton.

July 23rd: Reading: Kenneth Blake Vernon “The Problem of Induction”. (First Argumentative Essay due)

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

July 26th: Reading: Chad Vance, “Personal Identity”.

July 27th: Reading: Jonah Nagashima “Free Will and Free Choice”.

July 28th: Reading: Galen Strawson, pp. 600-09 of the Norton.

July 29th: Reading: Chelsea Haramia “Free Will and Moral Responsibility”; Rebecca Renninger “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”.

Part 4: Action and Normative Ethics:

July 30th: Discuss Action Theory. Introduce Utilitarianism. Reading: J.S. Mill, pp. 790-798 of the Norton; Shane Gronholz “Consequentialism”.

August 2nd: Utilitarianism cont. No reading.

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

August 4th: Virtue Ethics. Reading: Aristotle, pp. 813-822 of the Norton; Rosalind Hursthouse, pp. 824-30 of the Norton. (Second Argumentative Essay due)

August 5th: Virtue Ethics cont.

August 6th: Exam 2. No class.

If we have time, some readings in meta-ethics that we’ll cover:

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”