

PHI 4930 Philosophy of Sex and Gender Fall 2021

Professor: Dr. Arina Pismenny

Email: arinapismenny@ufl.edu

Office: Griffin-Floyd Hall, room 306

Office Hours: **M:** 1:45-2:45 in person or by [Zoom](#); **Th:**12-1:30 by [Zoom only](#), or by appointment

Class: MWF 10:40-11:30 AM in Matherly Hall, room 0051, or synchronously on [Zoom](#)

Communication: please contact me by email. It is best to send an email via Canvas. In your email, please indicate your name, course and section. Please allow 24 hours for an answer.

All the reading materials are posted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to download them and read them.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Course Description:

This course will examine questions about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. We will address questions about sexual dimorphism (or polymorphism) at the biological level (female, male, hermaphrodite) and at the cultural level (feminine, masculine, trans gender, intersex, etc.), and the complicated relationships between the two. Throughout this process we will attempt to flesh out the issues with definitions of each of these categories, and attempt to zoom in on the kinds of definitions needed for different kinds of inquiry, i.e., metaphysical, scientific, moral, and political. While laying out the foundation for understanding these categories, we will also look at social and political issues pertaining to them.

Learning Objectives:

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

Course Evaluations: 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/>. In evaluating this course, you should refer to the **Learning Objectives** on the syllabus (p. 1).

Teaching Philosophy:

My goal is not to convince you that any of the authors in our text have all the answers. It is to help you understand their thoughts so that critical reflection on those thoughts can play a meaningful role in forming your own.

II. DOING YOUR PART

It's your decision whether or not to remain in this course. If you decide to stay, think of your decision as a commitment to participate actively in your own learning, take responsibility for your education, and be an active learner in this course. Philosophy requires a lot of reading, and it is very difficult reading. You will need to devote a significant amount of time to it. You will need to carefully follow the schedule at the end of the syllabus, regularly participate in class discussions, and seriously prepare for the assignments.

III. HOW YOU AND I WILL MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

Measuring your progress in points will make it easy for you to determine your own grade and progress at any time. The total possible number of points for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be assigned on the standard point/percentage scale:

A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 84-86; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-79; C: 74-76; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-69; D: 64-66; D-: 60-63; E: 0-59.

What do grades mean at UF?

A is for excellent work.

B is for very good work.

C is for adequate or average work.

D is for below average, inadequate work.

E is for unacceptable work, i.e., work that is not at the college level.

For more information about UF's grading policies please visit [here](#).

Components of Course Grade

Weekly reading notes (8): 2.5 pts/post; 20%

Friday team-led discussions: 10%

Short paper #1: 15%

Short paper #2: 15%

Final paper: 30%

Attendance: 5%

Participation: 5%

Total: 100%

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Homework: You have homework due every week. It consists of reading the assigned materials.

Weekly reading notes: (almost) every week, due Sundays (available until 11.59 pm the latest), you will need to submit your notes on the readings due next week. There are specific instructions provided for submitting notes.

There are eleven (11) graded (complete/incomplete) reading notes submissions. Three lowest scores will be dropped. So only 8 grades out of 11 will count towards your final grade. Each submission is worth 2.5 points. The weekly reading notes are worth 20% of the final grade.

Friday team-led discussions: Every student is randomly paired with a classmate to lead a Friday discussion session. During it, the pair will summarize the content discussed during the Monday and Wednesday classes that week, and present whatever wasn't covered from the readings due that week. They will then lead the discussion with the rest of the class, posing questions to the class, and answering students' questions to their best ability. The team-led discussion is worth 10% of the final grade.

Extra credit: attend one or more of the suggested events, write a report on time to get extra points.

Papers: You are asked to write two short papers (750-1000 words each), and one long final paper (2000-4000) for this course. All papers are thesis papers. In the short papers you will need to answer a specific question based on the readings. For each short paper you will have two options to pick from. Note that each option has a different due date. For the final paper, you will need to choose a topic, develop a thesis, and defend it by providing evidence and arguments. You will need to demonstrate the knowledge you

have acquired in the course. The short papers are worth 15% each, and the final paper is worth 30% of the final grade.

***Late Work** will not be accepted. There will be no make-ups for missed assignments. This policy may be overridden only by extenuating cases. In order to makeup an assignment, the following conditions must be met: (i) the instructor must be notified well in advance, (ii) the student must have a formal written excuse, and (iii) the missed assignment must be made-up within one calendar week.

Attendance: Your presence is absolutely necessary to ensure the fullest realization of our learning objectives. You are allowed four excused absences in the course. Beyond this number, proper documentation will be required to excuse absences (e.g., a doctor's note). You must provide this documentation to me within one week of the missed class.

If you are absent for an excused reason, you will not lose any points and the absence will not exhaust one of your free absences. In most cases you need documentation of the excuse (see below). Excused absences are limited to the following cases:

- *Health.* If your physical or mental health causes you to miss class, a note from your doctor or from the Dean of Students within one week of the absence will count as documentation for this.
- *Personal Reasons.* The Dean of Students will send me a note of excuse if you have personal reasons for needing one, such as a death in the family or an ongoing medical issue. I need your note from the DOS within one week of the absence. Note: I do not get involved in adjudicating good personal reasons from bad ones. I let the DOS handle that.
- *Some UF Activities are excused absences.* You must provide a note for activities absences prior to the day of absence. Notes may come from the activity supervisor, such as a coach. Regular activities absences will lead to make-up assignments.
- *Religious observances.* Talk to me at the beginning of the semester about this.

If you think you have an exceptional case, talk to me.

All other absences are typically unexcused, including some very good reasons to miss a class, like career or family events. I support your interest in these things, and understand why you might prioritize them over class, but that does not make them excused absences. Please note that you are responsible for the information presented in your discussion section even if you miss class, whether for excused or unexcused reasons.

Once you have passed the allowed number of absences, 5% will be taken off from your attendance points for each additional absence. Attendance is worth 5% of your final grade. Please be on time.

Since we are living a pandemic, it is likely that everyone is facing unique challenges at home, at school, at work. Our goal as your educators is to help you succeed. For this reason, if you are requiring help or assistance, please contact us. We are all in this together.

For most people this is a new format of attending class and learning. You might be difficult to concentrate. I encourage you to make an effort to make your learning environment as distraction free as possible. Put a timeout on websites and apps like Facebook, so that you have an easier time concentrating during class. Paying attention during lectures and discussions is absolutely necessary in order to do well in the course.

Covid-19 Regulations for in-class attendance:

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

If you are registered to attend class in-person,

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms](#).
 - Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies](#).

You are always welcome to attend class via Zoom.

Participation: Participation means contributing to the class discussions by asking questions, making comments, and answering questions. This portion of your grade will depend on your engagement and contribution (quality, not quantity). Your class participation will be tracked. Participation is worth 5% of your final grade.

Zoom: my office hours and lectures will all be held on Zoom and in-person this semester. To access lectures via Zoom, go to www.ufl.zoom.us and sign in with your UF credentials. It is recommended that you download the Zoom app on your computer. You can also access it on your smart phone.

When you click on Meetings, you should see all of our lectures scheduled.

You can also access Zoom lectures via Canvas by (1) clicking on Zoom Conferences (left side panel) or by (2) clicking online Canvas Calendar, and clicking on the Zoom class scheduled.

You can find more information about using Zoom at <https://ufl.zoom.us/>.

If you need assistance, please contact UFIT <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>. They are available 24/7 by phone and email: (352) 392-HELP (4357) helpdesk@ufl.edu

Recording lectures and discussions: Please be advised that all class lectures and discussions will be recorded, and made available to everyone after class.

- Please be advised that a recording of a class lecture may not be published without the consent of the lecturer.
 - **Publish** is defined as sharing, transmitting, circulating, distributing, or providing access to a Recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section.
 - A recording, or transcript of the recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper or leaflet.
- A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Note taking: [Research shows that note taking significantly improves students' ability to remember and understand the material they have learned](https://tinyurl.com/h98vbgr)

< <https://tinyurl.com/h98vbgr> >. When taking notes, you should write down ideas. You should **not** be copying the text of the slides, as the slides are available on Canvas, and you are

wasting time re-writing them. Instead, you should be summarizing the material in your own sentences. This is a very good way to learn.

Hand-written notes are superior to typed-up notes because writing notes by hand engages your mind to a much greater extent than typing does. For this reason, I recommend to all of you to write your notes by hand.

Electronic devices class policy: Cell phone and smart watch use during class is not allowed for any reason. Please be sure that they are turned off. If you use your cell phone in class, you will be asked to leave, and attendance points will be subtracted.

You may use a laptop or tablet for note-taking *only*.

If you wish to record a lecture, be sure to obtain permission from me first.

Accommodations and other 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>; 352-392-1575.

The instructors of this course are committed to supporting all of our students. Please let us know about accommodations that will ensure a welcoming space for you.

Health and Wellness Resources:

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](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

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](#).

University Police Department: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

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](#).

Cheating and Plagiarism policy: If you are cheating on an assignment, you will receive an F on that assignment (no retakes). If you plagiarize an essay, full penalties of the university will be strictly enforced.

Here is **University of Florida's Policy on Academic Honesty**

https://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/media/flexibleuceufl.edu/documents/uf_policy_student_conduct.pdf

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-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."

A. Cheating. A Student cannot use unauthorized materials or resources in any academic activity for academic advantage or benefit. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Using any materials or resources prepared by another Student without the other Student's express Consent or without proper attribution to the other Student.
2. Using any materials or resources, through any medium, which the Faculty has not given express permission to use and that may confer an academic benefit to the Student.
3. Using additional time, or failing to stop working when instructed, on any time-bound academic activity.
4. Failing to follow the directions of a proctor of any academic activity, when such conduct could lead to an academic advantage or benefit.
5. Collaborating with another person, through any medium, on any academic activity, when Faculty has expressly prohibited collaboration.

B. Complicity in Violating the Student Honor Code. Attempting, aiding, encouraging, facilitating, abetting, conspiring to commit, hiring someone else to commit, giving or receiving bribes to secure, or being a participant (by act or omission) in any act prohibited by the Student Honor Code.

C. False or Misleading Information.

1. A Student must not make a false or misleading statement during the Investigation or resolution of an alleged Student Honor Code violation.
2. A Student must not make a false or misleading statement for the purpose of procuring an improper academic advantage for any Student.
3. A Student must not use or present fabricated information, falsified research, or other findings if the Student knows or reasonably should be aware that the information, research, or other finding is fabricated or falsified.

D. Interference with an Academic Activity.

1. A Student must not take any action or take any material for the purpose of interfering with an academic activity, through any means over any medium.
2. A Student must not be disruptive to the testing environment or other academic activity.

E. Plagiarism. 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.

F. Submission of Academic Work Purchased or Obtained from an Outside Source. A Student must not submit as their own work any academic work in any form that the Student purchased or otherwise obtained from an outside source, including but not limited to: academic materials in any form prepared by a commercial or individual vendor of academic materials; a collection of research papers, tests, or academic materials maintained by a Student Organization or other entity or person, or any other sources of academic work.

G. Unauthorized Recordings. A Student must not, without express authorization from Faculty, make or receive any Recording, through any means over any medium, of any academic activity, including but not limited to a Recording of any class or of any meeting with Faculty. Students registered with the Disability Resource Center who are provided reasonable accommodations that include allowing such Recordings must inform Faculty before making such Recordings.

H. Unauthorized Taking or Receipt of Materials or Resources to Gain an Improper Academic Advantage. A Student, independently or with another person or other people, must not without express authorization take, give, transmit, or receive materials, information, or resources in any manner, through any medium, for the purpose of gaining or providing an improper academic advantage to any Student.

IV. USEFUL LINKS

Canvas

<https://ufl.instructure.com/>

Canvas help: <<http://guides.instructure.com>> You will also see more help options by clicking "help" in the upper right corner of the Canvas homepage. I am not qualified to give tech help for Canvas; if you need help, contact UF's Computing Help Desk: <<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>>

Zoom www.ufl.zoom.us

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

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

Counseling and Wellness Center

<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, (352)392-1575

University Police Department

<https://police.ufl.edu/> (352)392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Resources

<https://titleix.ufl.edu/full-sexual-harassment-and-misconduct-policy/>

Writing Studio

<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Libraries

<https://www.ufl.edu/academics/libraries/>

LGBTQ Affairs

<https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu/>

Philosophy at UF:

Philosophy Department

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/index.html>

Philosophy Discussions – Food and Talk

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad/ugrad-food&talk.html>

Undergraduate Philosophy Society

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/8317358197/about/>

Philosophy Major and Minor Requirements

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad/ugrad-major.html>

Hare Essay Competition

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad.html?page=hare>

Philosophy Research Sources

How to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Philosophy Bites Podcast

<http://philosophybites.libsyn.com>

Philosophy of TED Talks

<https://www.ted.com/talks?topics%5B%5D=philosophy>

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Outline* Subject to Change:

I. Introducing Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Gender

WEEK 1 8/23, 8/25, & 8/27 WELCOME! Introduction, What is Philosophy? What is Philosophy of Sex and Gender?

Readings: The syllabus

WEEK 2 8/30, 9/1, & 9/3 Sex and Gender: Core Questions

Readings: Skim through Mari Mikkola, [“Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender”](#) and Raja Halwani, [“Sex and Sexuality”](#) from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Recommended: Alan Soble & Raja Halwani, “Introduction: The Analytic Categories of the Philosophy of Sex”, Greta Christina, “Are We Having Sex Now or What?”

WEEK 3 9/8 & 9/10 Sexual Reproduction and Sexual Behavior

9/6 – NO CLASS

Readings: John Maynard Smith & Eörs Szathmáry, “The Origin of Sex”; Cindy Meston & David M. Buss, “Why Humans Have Sex”

Recommended: TBA

WEEK 4 9/13, 9/15, & 9/17 How Many Sexes?

Readings: Joan Roughgarden, “Sex and Gender”; Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes” and “The Five Sexes Revisited”

Recommended: Cordelia Fine, "Unraveling Hardwiring" from *Delusions of Gender*

WEEK 5 9/20, 9/22, & 9/24 Sex and Gender

Readings: Simone de Beauvoir, Introduction from *The Second Sex*; Rebecca Jordan-Young, "Masculine and Feminine Sexuality" from *Brain Storm*

Recommended: Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl"; Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"

WEEK 6 9/27, 9/29, & 10/1 Masculine and Feminine

Readings: Judith Halberstam, "Female Masculinity", Michael Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia"

Recommended: bell hooks, "Reconstructing Black Masculinity"; Judith Halberstam, "Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum"

WEEK 7 10/4 & 10/6

10/8 – NO CLASS HOMECOMING

Readings: Charlotte Witt, "What is Gender Essentialism?"; Ron Mallon, "Human Categories Beyond Non-essentialism"

Recommended: Lea Skewes, Cordelia Fine, Nick Haslam, "Beyond Mars and Venus: The role of gender essentialism in support for gender inequality and backlash"

WEEK 8 10/11, 10/13, & 10/15

Readings: Sally Haslanger, "Gender, race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?", bell hooks, "Ain't I a Woman?"

Recommended: Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color"

WEEK 9 10/18, 10/20, & 10/22 Transgender Identities

Readings: Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trans 101"; Jan Morris, from *My Conundrum*; Julia Serano from *Whipping Girl*

Recommended: Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion"; Watch: *Disclosure* (2020) documentary by Sam Feder (available on Netflix)

WEEK 10 10/25, 10/27, & 10/29 Transgender Identities

Readings: Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trans Identities and First-Person Authority"; Burkay Ozturk, "The Negotiative Theory of Gender Identity and the Limits of First-Person Authority"

Recommended: Robin Dembroff, "Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as Critical Gender Kind"

WEEK 11 11/1, 11/3, & 11/5 Some Normative Questions

Readings: Ronald de Sousa, "Do We Need Genders?"; Abigail Saguy, Juliet Williams, Robin Dembroff, and Daniel Wodak, "We Should All Use They/Them Pronouns...Eventually"

Recommended: Richard Wasserstrom, "Sex Roles and the Ideal Society"

WEEK 12 11/8, 11/10, & 11/12 Sexual Orientation

Readings: Robin Dembroff, "What is sexual orientation?"; Raja Halwani, "Pansexualism"

Recommended: John Corvino, "Social Constructionism" from *Sex from Plato to Paglia: A Philosophical Encyclopedia*

WEEK 13 11/15, 11/17, & 11/19 Sexual Identity

Readings: Kim Hall, "Thinking Queerly about sex and sexuality"; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (only pp. 11-13, and 17-20)

Recommended: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now" from *Tendencies*

WEEK 14 NO CLASSES – THANKSGIVING**11/22 – CLASS CANCELLED****WEEK 15 11/29, 12/1, & 12/3 "Personal is Political"**

Readings: TBA

Recommended: TBA

WEEK 16 12/6 & 12/8 Summing up

No new readings

FINAL PAPER DUE MONDAY, 12/13