

PHI 2010 INTRO(DUCTION) TO PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2022

Instructor:	James Gillespie	Time:	T period 4; R periods 4–5
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Office: FLO 316

Office Hours: T 12:00–1:30pm, W 1:30–3:00pm, and by appointment.

Course Description: This is a general introduction to philosophy, with an emphasis on actively *doing* philosophy: understanding what philosophy is, the unique goods one can gain by doing philosophy, and actively engaging in the critical, open-minded thinking and writing characteristic of philosophy. After a brief introduction to philosophy itself and reasoning, we look at some of the most important and provocative questions throughout the discipline's history. These questions include: (i) does God exist?, (ii) do ordinary, everyday objects really exist?, (iii) do we possess free will?, (iv) are we the same person over time?, (v) what is knowledge? and what, if anything, can we know?, and (vi) are aesthetic truths objective or subjective? The emphasis throughout is on writing clearly about such elusive questions and presenting good reasons to endorse one answer over another. This is a writing intensive course, so the final grade for this course depends on your ability to write well enough to adequately communicate your thinking. You will have to write at least 6000 words to be eligible for the Writing Requirement. This course also counts towards the Humanities (H) general education requirements.

Objectives: While the focus of the course is, obviously, philosophical questions and topics, the techniques and methods for dealing with them apply generally. In this vein, this course is designed to introduce students to essential components of actually *doing* philosophy. By the end of the course, students will: understand traditional issues in philosophy, know how to engage with those issues directly and in a critical way, and learn general strategies for interacting with complex ideas in a lucid and robust way.

Required Textbook: None!

Tentative Course Outline: The course is divided in **six parts**.

- Part 1 (Jan 6–Jan 20), Foreword: **Introduction and Existence of God**
- Part 2 (Jan 20–Feb 3), For Free [Will]? – Interlude: **Free Will**
- Part 3 (Feb 8–Feb 22), Livin' in a New World: **Ordinary Objects**
- Part 4 (Feb 24–Mar 17), Who R U?: **Personal Identity**
- Part 5 (Mar 17–Mar 31), Everybody Knows: **Knowledge**
- Part 6 (Apr 5–Apr 19), Ain't It Funny: **Aesthetics/Ethics**

Each class meeting will require one or two readings (sometimes the same reading on different days) and, occasionally, unannounced quizzes. The full schedule with specific readings is present on Canvas. This will give you a rough breakdown of what to read and when. It is, like all things, subject to change as we progress through the course.

Grade Breakdown: Attendance & participation (10%), six papers (85%), quizzes (5%). The table below provides the grading scale for this course as well as the corresponding grade values. Information regarding UF's Grading Policy can be found <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value	Grade Scale	Grade Value	Grade Scale	Grade Value
100–92 = A	A = 4.0	81–79 = B-	B- = 2.67	68–66 = D+	D+ = 1.33
91–89 = A-	A- = 3.67	78–76 = C+	C+ = 2.33	65–62 = D	D = 1.00
88–86 = B+	B+ = 3.33	75–72 = C	C = 2.00	61–59 = D-	D- = 0.67
85–82 = B	B = 3.00	71–69 = C-	C- = 1.67	58–0 = E	E = 0.00

Additionally, I will break down the grading for the six papers required in this course as follows. Your best paper will be worth 25% of your final grade, the worst will be worth just 5%, and the others will fall between those as follows (ranked from best to worst):

- 1: **25%**
- 2: **20%**
- 3: **15%**
- 4: **10%**
- 5: **10%**
- 6: **5%**

Because your papers are the primary means of determining your grade, this grading system ensures that you aren't unfairly punished for your worst-graded paper and that you are appropriately rewarded for your best work.

Quizzes: In order to ensure that you are actively working through the material, there will be frequent assignments (your papers) and occasional, unannounced quizzes. These are not meant to serve as any sort of punishment or excess challenge; they merely serve to check how well you understand the material independent of your papers. Quizzes will always concern the specific reading assigned for the day.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded at the beginning of each class. You will be given **3** grace absences. Each further, unexcused absence will result in a one letter grade reduction in your participation grade, e.g., from a B to a C. More than **7** unexcused absences will result in a ceiling on your **final** course grade: no matter how well you do, your **best possible grade** for the course will be a C. 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>.

Philosophy is not something that is effectively done all by yourself; discussion is vital both to understand complex positions from a variety of perspectives and to check your own reasoning. It is nevertheless essential to appreciating the material in a thorough fashion that you make the effort to work your own way through it, doing your best to decide what you think about it, confronting those thoughts with questions you come up with and those you encounter in class, and so on. To encourage such active engagement with the material, you will be graded on your in-class participation (including office visits).

Papers: There will be a paper due **five days after the end of each part** (by 11:59pm). Because this course counts for the 6000 word writing requirement, and because there are six papers assigned in this

course, each paper has a minimum word requirement of 1000 words and a maximum word limit of 1200 words. The criteria use for evaluating papers is further detailed on Canvas.

Canvas: You know what it is. I will post all readings, a schedule of those readings, a copy of the syllabus, and other supplementary material on Canvas. If you are having trouble (for whatever reason) finding a reading or notes on Canvas, ask me. If you encounter any general difficulties logging in or accessing anything on the course page, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4537.

Important Dates: The following is a strong approximation of when each of your papers will be due, but they are subject to change as the semester progresses:

Paper #1	25 Jan
Paper #2	8 Feb
Paper #3	27 Feb
Paper #4	22 Mar
Paper #5	5 Apr
Paper #6	24 Apr

Classroom Policies:

A note on laptops: Laptops are not to be used during class unless special accommodations are required. Given the type of course this is, a laptop is far from necessary.

Accommodations for Students with Disability: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu> for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

Further Resources, Just in Case: You should be aware that UF provides counseling and other kinds of help for students in distress. You can call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at 352-392-1575 and see their website <https://counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

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. 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.