

PHI 2010: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
RUSONG HUANG
SPRING 2022 SYLLABUS

Instructor Information and Office Hours

Instructor: Rusong Huang
Email: rusonghuang@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Friday, 1-4pm
Persona Zoom Address: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/6842605694>

Course Times and Locations

Times: Tuesday, 5th & 6th Period; Thursday, 6th Period
Location: MAT 115

Course Description

The patient and thorough exploration of philosophical questions is an ideal way to develop skills in clear writing and critical thinking. This course introduces the discipline of philosophy with a focus on developing those skills. Most of the semester is devoted three traditional issues: (a) What is knowledge? What can we know? (b) What is free will? Is there reason to think we don't have any free will? (c) What is morality all about? Are there facts about what is morally right and wrong? At the end of the semester, we will more briefly explore some famous questions about happiness and the meaning of life. The emphasis throughout is on writing clearly about such elusive questions and presenting good reasons to endorse one answer over another.

General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course confers General Education credit for Composition (C). Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, punctuation, usage) and the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)

Students will gain a basic understanding of philosophy and learn how to utilize this knowledge to evaluate and develop their own ideas. Students will pursue these goals across these three categories, all of which will be assessed via written assignments and participation in discussion:

- *Content*: Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used according to methods of the discipline.
- *Communication*: Students will learn to communicate knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students will learn to identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area, as well as to approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives. We will do this carefully and logically, in order to develop reasoned solutions to philosophical problems.

Writing Requirement (WR)

This course confers 6000 words towards the WR, which 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, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on students' written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.

You will receive two grades for this course. One will be an overall course grade (see Grade Breakdown below). The other indicates whether you have satisfied the WR 6000 for the course. To earn the WR 6000 credit in this class, *you must receive an overall course grade of C or higher* (= earn general education credit) and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course (= *satisfactory completion of all six writing assignments plus earning a C+ or higher on at least four of the six*). Requirements for WR in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/writing-requirement/>

Required Materials

No book purchases are required, as all readings are made available as PDF files online through the Canvas system. The complete set of readings, with links to each, can be found on the [Readings List](#) page online.

Course Structure

This course is broken up into five units as follows:

1. Introduction to Philosophy and Argumentation (2 sections)
2. Knowledge and Skepticism (3 sections)
3. Free Will (3 sections)
4. Meta-Ethics (3 sections)
5. Happiness and Meaning (3 sections)

Assessment

Excelling in the Course

- To do well in this course you must be in class prepared to engage the assigned material. This includes: keeping current on the reading assignments, bringing the current reading with you to class, and being aware of the course schedule and activities as discussed in class and posted on the course web page.
- You are responsible for regularly checking your UF email.
- Important announcements are often made at the beginning of lecture and are not repeated.
- Attendance in lectures is required.
- Most people who do well in this course begin writing assignments well in advance of deadlines. You should meet with your instructor to discuss your plans for your papers, and you should expect to write and revise drafts of your essays.

Grade Breakdown

1. Attendance and Participation Grade	10%
2. Logic Exercise	5%
3. 6 Papers (1000-1200 words each)	85%
Total: 100%	

Additionally, I may or may not drop your worst paper depending upon how the final grades distribution looks like for the course. We will discuss paper details more as the first due date inches closer. Grades for all written materials will be posted as soon as they are graded, so you will be able to monitor your progress on Canvas. You may check in on your discussion grade throughout the semester by contacting your instructor.

Grading Scale

Letter	Grade Points	Percent
A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83

Letter	Grade Points	Percent
C	2.0	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	0.67	60-63

If your final percentage grade for the course falls between two grades in the end, I will round to the nearest mark. X.5 rounds up; for example, 93.5 percent of all points will earn you an A. Any 93 below 93.5 is an A-. UF policy on assigning grade points: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Attendance and Participation Grade

This portion of your grade will depend on your attendance, engagement, and contribution (quality, not quantity). Quality participation depends upon being prepared and making a substantial effort to engage the material in class. Students who attend class but who are not prepared and participating should expect to receive a discussion grade that matches their contribution.

Attendance is mandatory and will be recorded at the beginning of each class. You will be given 2 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 6 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.

Proper documentation will be required to excuse absences (e.g., a doctor's note). You must provide this documentation to your instructor within one week of the missed class. Arriving to discussion section more than ten minutes late without prior instructor approval counts as an absence. If you are absent from class 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. See your instructor at the beginning of the semester about this.

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 class even if you miss class, whether for excused or unexcused reasons.

Logic Exercise

There is a special logic exercise assignment; it requires you to identify valid forms of argument and demonstrate through an example how an argument might fail to be valid, explaining how your example does this. Your grade on this assignment is worth just 5% of the course grade.

Papers

Papers will be evaluated on five factors: comprehension of the material, clarity of the writing, mechanics, the power of the argument you yourself present, and your skill in defending your own argument against objections. Papers will depend only upon the texts for the course, the conversations we have in lecture, and some careful thinking, writing, and revising. No outside sources, including other books, articles, web sources, and so on, are permitted to appear in your assignments.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced with one-inch margins, page numbers, and 12 point Times New Roman font. You must include a word-count at the top of page one. Please also include your name. To turn in your written work, you must upload your paper onto UF's e-learning site, Canvas. 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.

Students will also find a number of resources for improving their writing at the university's Writing Studio page (<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>), including a link to an electronic version of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (<https://www.bartleby.com/141/>), the recommended style manual for this course.

Late Written Work

In general you should assume that late work will not be accepted without penalty. If there is a foreseeable conflict with a due date for any reason, including activities, religious observances, and so on, you should make alternative arrangements with your instructor well in advance so that we can set an early deadline.

Computer errors (including disk, printer, or e-mail problems) are not acceptable excuses for late work. Extensions on written work without penalty will only be considered if you have a documented reason for your request.

You may, however, without prior permission or documentation, grant yourself an extension with penalty on any assignment except the last one. The penalty for taking extra time is 1/3 of a letter grade deducted immediately at the deadline, and again at each 24-hour mark beyond the deadline until the work is submitted (including weekend days).

For the first five assignments, no assignments will be accepted which are more than one week late; for the final essay, no late assignments will be accepted. Exceptions require instructor approval.

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/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Other Course Policies

COVID-19

You are encouraged to comply with ongoing UF directives regarding COVID-19.

Electronic Devices

If you have electronic devices with you—including phones, computers, tablets, and recording devices—these should be silenced, and you will need to suspend interaction with them during class (except to start or

stop recording as appropriate). This means you will need to bring a hard copy of your reading and a way to take notes, as you won't be able to use your devices to facilitate in-class activity.

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide 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. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. 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.

Working Together

You are encouraged to talk to one another outside of class about philosophy and about this course as much as possible. This includes discussion of paper topics, and it includes reading drafts of one another's work. If you do work together, please be mindful of the following:

1. Your final product must be your own original work, and not a repetition of someone else's ideas or essay.
2. Each essay must be a piece of written thinking in itself. Sometimes conversation in advance of writing can make you feel like the conclusions of that conversation are now established, such that you can now talk about them by stating them (or assuming, or implying). But your essays need to "show your work"—if the argument is not explicitly on the page, you haven't made the argument. We need to see the important pieces of reasoning.
3. You must be willing to endorse what ends up in your paper. Beware of letting others persuade you to go in the wrong direction. You are ultimately responsible for both the understandings and misunderstandings in the papers you turn in.

Classroom Conduct

Philosophy is sometimes mistakenly understood to be a combative exercise. That style does not impress me at all. I encourage you to direct your first effort toward trying to understand and develop both the contributions of the authors we read and the contributions of others in the class. Where those are limited, of course, good philosophy also happens when you (respectfully) disagree, note tensions, make distinctions, reshape the question, and so on. Students who repeatedly act aggressively, in ways which attempt to incite unnecessary conflict or to dominate the discussion and/or other people, will receive a zero for participation.

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 about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult with the instructor. You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Repeat offenders may be penalized by suspension or expulsion from the university.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>). 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.

Diversity and Inclusion

The instructors of this course are committed to supporting all our students—to making class administration fair for everyone, to ensuring class space is welcoming for all and assignments and discussions productive opportunities for all. We invite conversation with you about how we may better accomplish this at any time.

Course Evaluations

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, but 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>.

Campus Resources: Health and Wellness

- 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
- University Police Department: call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

PHI 2010: Introduction to Philosophy (R. Huang)
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

The reading listed for a given date is the subject of lecture on that date. You should read assigned material before coming into class to hear the lecture.

Unit I: Introduction to Philosophy and Argumentation (2 sections)		
DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 1</i> R, Jan 6	Beardsley & Beardsley, "What is Philosophy?"	
<i>Week 2</i> T, Jan 11 R, Jan 13	Cornman, Lehrer, and Pappas, "The Tools of the Trade" Plato, Laches	
Unit II: Knowledge and Skepticism (3 sections)		
DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 3</i> T, Jan 18 R, Jan 20	Susan Haack, "Epistemology: Who Needs It?" (Lecture I) Haack (Lecture II)	Logic Exercise Due Jan 18 at the start of class (12:50pm)
<i>Week 4</i> T, Jan 25 R, Jan 27	John Pollock, "A Brain in a Vat" Rene Descartes, "Meditation I." (Lecture I) Pollock & Descartes (Lecture II)	
<i>Week 5</i> T, Feb 1 R, Feb 3	G. E. Moore, "Certainty" (excerpt) Renee Smith, "Moore and Descartes Meet in a Bar" (Lecture I) Moore & Smith, (Lecture II)	1 st Paper Due Feb 4 by 11:59pm
Unit III: Free Will (3 sections)		
DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 6</i> T, Feb 8 R, Feb 10	Baron D'Holbach, "Of the System of Man's Free Agency" (Lecture I) D'Holbach (Lecture II)	
<i>Week 7</i> T, Feb 15 R, Feb 17	R. E. Hobart, "Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable Without It" (Lecture I) Hobart, (Lecture II)	2 nd Paper Due Feb 18 by 11:59pm
<i>Week 8</i> T, Feb 22 R, Feb 24	Philippa Foot, "Free Will as Involving Determinism" (Lecture I) Foot (Lecture II)	
Unit IV: Meta-Ethics (3 sections)		
DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 9</i> T, Mar 1 R, Mar 3	John Corvino, "The Fact/Opinion Distinction" Stephen Satris, "Student Relativism"	3 rd Paper Due Mar 4 by 11:59pm
<i>Week 10</i> Spring Break		
<i>Week 11</i> T, Mar 15 R, Mar 17	Gilbert Harman, "Ethics and Observation" (Lecture I) Harman (Lecture II)	

<i>Week 12</i> T, Mar 22 R, Mar 24	Jonathan Bennett, " The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn " (Lecture I) Bennett (Lecture II)	4 th Paper Due Mar 25 by 11:59pm
<i>Week 13</i> T, Mar 29 R, Mar 31	Alison Hills, " Faultless Moral Disagreement " (Lecture I) Hills (Lecture II)	
Unit V: Happiness and Meaning (3 sections)		
DATE	READING	ASSIGNMENT
<i>Week 14</i> T, Apr 5 R, Apr 7	Derek Parfit, " What Makes Someone's Life Go Best? " (Lecture I) Parfit (Lecture II)	5 th Paper Due Apr 8 by 11:59pm
<i>Week 15</i> T, Apr 12 R, Apr 14	Robert Nozick, " The Experience Machine " (Lecture I) Nozick (Lecture II)	
<i>Week 16</i> T, Apr 19	Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics	6 th Paper Due Apr 22 by 11:59pm
NO FINAL EXAM		