

# Theory of Knowledge

*NOTE: it is your responsibility to read this document carefully. This is an agreement between you and your instructor. If you email me about something that is obviously stated in the syllabus, you will either receive no answer or I will reply, simply, "Read the syllabus!" However, if you read the syllabus and you still do not have an answer, then email me with your question.*

## **I Course Information**

- Course number: PHI 3300
- Class 16023, section 332C
- Period 5 (11:45 PM - 12:35 PM)
- Location: Matherly Hall 0115
- Instructor: Rodrigo Borges
  - Rodrigo Borges
  - Office: Griffin–Floyd Hall, room 314.
  - Office Hours: Thursdays 9:00pm – 12:00 (or by appointment).
  - Contact Information: [rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu](mailto:rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu).

## 2 Course Goals

This course will enable students to think critically about some of the central issues in the theory of knowledge, such as the concepts of knowledge, justification, evidence, and reliability.

## 3 Textbook

The required reading for this course is Michael Huemer's 'Epistemology: Contemporary Readings' (Routledge).

## Recommended Reading

1. A terrific guide to general writing rules is Strunk and White's 'The Elements of Style.' The first edition is available online for free: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.
2. A more recent style manual is Steven Pinker's 'Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century.' The book can be found anywhere books are sold.
3. The philosopher Jim Pryor (UNC) has his suggestions on how to read philosophy freely available here; he has also published suggestions on how to write philosophy here.

## 4 Attendance and Classroom Policies

Students are expected to attend class and to have done all assigned reading in advance. Failure to do so will adversely affect students' ability to perform well in this course.

***Attendance is required and expected (see below for details).***

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>.

Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. However, the recording will not be shared unless you have a valid excuse. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voice recorded.

If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the 'chat' feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials by students or any other party is prohibited.

In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

1. If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.
2. You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.
  - 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.
  - Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.
3. If you are sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test and Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email [covid@shcc.ufl.edu](mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu)) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test and Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the UF Health Screen, Test and Protect website for more information.
  - 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.
  - If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test and Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.

4. Continue to regularly visit [coronavirus.UFHealth.org](https://coronavirus.UFHealth.org) and [coronavirus.ufl.edu](https://coronavirus.ufl.edu) for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.
5. This course will be synchronously taught on Zoom in accordance with the HyFlex format. Please, visit the Zoom Conferences page on Canvas for links and details.

## 5 Course Requirements

Six different instruments will be used in order to measure student progress through the course. The name of each instrument, and the relative weight each of them carries in determining your final grade is the following; a brief description of each instrument follows.

Assignment	% of Course Grade
Attendance	10%
Homework	10%
Group Projects	25%
Presentation	25%
Papers	30%

### 5.1 Attendance

Starting on Wednesday 1/18, attendance will use the iClicker system. For information on this system, please see

- <https://classrooms.at.ufl.edu/classroom-technology/iclicker-response-system/>

For this class, you will use the iClicker Student Mobile application (or its web version).

You must create an iClicker account and download the app as soon as possible, but certainly before we start taking attendance on Wednesday 1/18. I will allow two (2) unexcused absences without penalty. Every other absence must either be excused by your instructor in accordance with UF attendance policy or your grade will incur a penalty of 2- percentage points of the attendance grade. However, once a student accumulates seven (7) or more unexcused absences in total they will receive a zero in their attendance grade (i.e., 10% of their total grade).

### 5.2 Homework

Homework will be posted on Canvas every Sunday. A hard copy of your answers is due in class Friday. Homework receives a pass/fail grade. Homework starts Wednesday 1/18, after the add-drop period.

Unless students have a valid excuse, they will not be allowed to make up missed homework.

### **5.3 Group Projects**

Starting on Wednesday 1/18, there will be one group project more or less every week, in class. Only students with a valid excuse will be allowed to make up missed group projects.

### **5.4 Presentation**

The class will be divided into small groups of 3 - 4 students. Each presentation will defend a particular thesis. The readings in this course will help inform your presentation. You might include your own research as well.

### **5.5 Papers**

Students will write three (3) (1400 – 1600 words) papers. Each paper will either ask you to present someone else's argument in your own words, or ask you to evaluate someone else's argument. The lowest grade will be dropped. No outside readings is required. A *sample paper* is available on Canvas.

*Students must complete ALL SWAs.*

### **Outside Reading**

No outside readings are required for the completion of SWAs or WEs. *However*, if you do plan to use an outside reading, you **MUST** check with your instructor or TA whether the particular reading you have in mind is an appropriate source. There are **ONLY TWO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule:

1. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy;
2. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

If you do not follow these instructions on the use of outside readings, you risk seriously harming your grade.

### **Basic Writing Assistance**

You may find it helpful to use the influential guide by Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, available free online at [www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/).

Another very useful resource is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, also known as the 'OWL.' It is especially good for getting detailed information on how to cite sources properly. You can find it at [owl.english.purdue.edu/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/).

UF has a dedicate writing program with a 'writing studio' that is intended to provide students with several resources for improving their writing. The site includes several resources, including links to the OWL site just mentioned and other items. You can find that site at [writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/](http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/).

The writing program provides assistance with writing for UF students, including distance students who are pursuing online-only courses. You can login to [tutortrac.clas.ufl.edu/](http://tutortrac.clas.ufl.edu/) to make arrangements to meet with a tutor. We must warn you, however, that while those tutors are surely good at helping you avoid certain kinds of problems, many writing tutors are not familiar with writing philosophy papers. What counts as a good paper for, say, an English class might not count as a good paper for philosophy. In philosophy, clear structure and explicit argumentation is at a premium. If you do meet with a tutor, you would be well advised to share with the tutor the sample argumentative essay so that he or she knows what sort of paper is needed in this class.

## 6 Grade Scale

See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

	Grade Scale	Grade Value
A	100 - 93	4.00
A-	92 - 90	3.67
B+	89 - 86	3.33
B	85 - 82	3.00
B-	81 - 79	2.67
C+	78 - 75	2.33
C	75 - 72	2.00
C-	71 - 69	1.67
D+	68 - 66	1.33
D	65 - 62	1.00
D-	61 - 60	0.67
E	59 - 0	0.00

## 7 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 or TAs in this class. 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.

## **8 Students with disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## **9 Online course evaluation**

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. 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>.

## **10 Office Hours**

I strongly encourage you to set up a meeting to discuss anything related to the course. Rodrigo will hold office hours on Thursdays 9:00am - 12:00pm (or by appointment via [rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu](mailto:rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu)).

## **11 Technical Issues**

Please, direct any questions about technical issues you might have to UF Helpdesk. The website is <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>. You may also call them at 352 392 4357.

## **12 Campus Resources**

- Health and Wellness:
  1. U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website ([www.umatter.ufl.edu](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu)) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
  2. Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website ([www.counseling.ufl.edu](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu)) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
  3. 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 ([www.shcc.ufl.edu](http://www.shcc.ufl.edu)).
  4. University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website ([www.police.ufl.edu](http://www.police.ufl.edu)) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
  5. 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 ([www.ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center](http://www.ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center)).

## **13 Academic Resources**

1. E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
2. Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
3. Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.



5. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
6. Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage ([here](#)) for more information.
7. On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process ([www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process](http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process)).

## **14 Class Schedule (Subject to Change)**

1/9 - Introduction, syllabus

1. Arguments

1/11 - Validity and Cogency (slides)

1/13 - Fallacies (slides)

1/16 - holiday

2. The Concept of Knowledge

1/18 - Gettier p.444

1/20 - Gettier

1/23 - Clark p.447

1/25 - Clark

1/27 - Discussion

1/30 - Goldman p.450

2/1 - Goldman

2/3 - Goldman

3. The Sources of Knowledge

3.1 Perception

2/6 - Reid's Essay p. 51

2/8 - Reid's Essay

2/10 - Discussion

3.2 Memory

2/13 - Pollock and Cruz p. 104

2/15 - Pollock and Cruz

2/17 - Discussion

3.3 Testimony

2/20 - Reid's Inquiry p.234

2/22 - Coady p.239

2/24 - Coady

4. Doubts about Knowledge

4.1 Skepticism about perception

2/27 - Descartes p.513

3/1 - Descartes p.513  
3/3 - Discussion  
3/6 - Dretske p.539  
3/8 - Dretske p.539  
3/10 - Dretske p.539  
3/13 - spring break  
3/15 - spring break  
3/17 - spring break  
4.2 Skepticism about induction  
3/20 - Goodman p.320  
3/22 - Goodman  
3/24 - Discussion  
4.3 Skepticism about Deduction  
3/27 - Carroll p.256  
3/29 - Carroll  
3/31 - Discussion  
4.4 Skepticism about reason  
4/3 - Sextus p.372  
4/5 - Kornblith p.275  
4/7 - Kornblith  
4/10 - Discussion  
5. Presentations  
4/12 - Presentations  
4/14 - Presentations  
4/17 - Presentations  
4/19 - Presentations  
4/21 - Presentations  
4/24 - Presentations  
4/26 - Evaluation