

PHI 2010: Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus - Fall 2023

Class Meeting Times and Locations

- **Lecture (Dorst)**
Mondays and Wednesdays 9:35am - 10:25am, WEIL 0270
- **Discussion Sections (TAs)**
Class 16296, Section 2006: Fridays 9:35am - 10:25am, MAT 0112
Class 16297, Section 2009: Fridays 9:35am - 10:25am, MAT 0105
Class 21294, Section 2007: Fridays 10:40am - 11:30am, TUR 2350
Class 16298, Section 2010: Fridays 10:40am - 11:30am, TUR 2349
Class 16295, Section 2008: Fridays 12:50pm - 1:40pm, TUR 2353
Class 16299, Section 2011: Fridays 12:50pm - 1:40pm, TUR 2350

Instructor Information

Chris Dorst
cdorst@ufl.edu
Office: 312 Griffin-Floyd Hall
Office Hours: TBD
Phone (office): (352) 273-1813

TA Information

Your TA is a graduate student in philosophy who will lead your Friday discussion sections, grade your papers, and do many other things besides. Your TA is your email contact for questions about administrative matters in the course.

James Wetzel
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Office Hours: TBD

Steven Clark
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Office: TBD
Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

This course is a general introduction to philosophical questions, methods, discussion, reading, and writing. It presumes no background in philosophy. We will be surveying various philosophical topics in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics, and political philosophy. Some examples of questions we will be addressing are: What evidence is there for or against the existence of God? How can we be sure that there is an external world? Is the mind distinct from the brain? What is the self? Do we have free will? What makes an action morally right or wrong? What distribution of social goods is demanded by justice? Throughout the course, there will be a heavy emphasis on learning to discuss and write about philosophical issues, so class discussion will be an important component.

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program and a UF Writing Requirement (WR4) course. A minimum grade of C is required for credit toward the Philosophy major or minor and for general education credit. For more detail, see the sections on

“General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes” and “Writing Requirement Credit” below.

Course Goals

This course is designed to introduce students to the practice of philosophy through the study of central philosophical questions and arguments, as represented by a selection of historical and/or contemporary readings. Students will learn some of the basic principles of good reasoning, including how to understand arguments, represent them clearly and fairly, and evaluate them for cogency. Students will also learn to develop their own arguments and views regarding the philosophical questions studied in the course in a compelling fashion. In these ways the course aims to develop students' own reasoning and communication skills in ways that will be useful in any further study of philosophy they undertake and beyond the bounds of philosophy itself.

Course Objectives

Students will demonstrate their competencies in understanding and assessing the philosophical theories studied in the course primarily via a set of assigned papers, in which they will be assessed for their abilities to: (i) understand and apply basic concepts of good reasoning, (ii) accurately and fairly describe and explain philosophical views represented in works assigned for the course, (iii) formulate arguments of their own while anticipating possible lines of objections and responding in a conscientious fashion, and (iv) speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and challenging matters of the sort raised by the philosophical material in the course.

Required Text

The textbook for this course is *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 9th Edition*, by John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, published by Oxford University Press. This book is available from the bookstore and on Amazon. The majority of our readings will come from this book; other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Evaluation and Expectations

Participation: 10%

Reading Quizzes: 10%

Paper 1: 15%

Paper 2: 20%

Paper 3: 20%

Paper 4: 25%

- **Participation**

Respectful participation is expected of everyone. It can take a variety of forms: contributing to class discussions, coming to office hours, emailing with questions, etc. Each class has assigned readings, which will require critical engagement and reflection. You should come to class prepared to discuss these readings and demonstrate that you

have thought critically about them beforehand. All of this is especially true for discussion sections; your TAs will take attendance, and your participation in these sections counts toward your participation grade.

- **Reading Quizzes**

There will be frequent quizzes during the course of the semester. Each quiz will contain two or three true-false, multiple-choice, or short answer questions about the required reading for that day's class. These will be graded for correctness. At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest reading quiz grades. If you miss a reading quiz because of an unexcused absence, you will not be able to retake it. If you will miss a reading quiz for excused absences such as a religious holiday, official university activity, doctor's office visit, or prolonged illness, you must notify me as soon as the situation arises; quizzes missed for these reasons will not count toward your two dropped quizzes for the semester as long as you notify me in a timely manner.

- **Papers**

You will write four papers for this course, due on September 24, October 22, November 19, and December 10. For each paper, you will be given the choice of several prompts, of which you must choose one and write a paper of 1000-1250 words (four to five double-spaced pages) in response. The prompts will concern topics we have read about and discussed in class, and they will be posted a week before papers are due. The papers give you the opportunity to illustrate your understanding of the material, as well as to develop your own views. Late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. a +/- increment) for each day after the due date. See the end of this syllabus for a rubric explaining the grading criteria for papers.

Grade Scale

The following grade scale will be used to assign final letter grades for the course. See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

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

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-87=B+	B+=3.33
86-83=B	B=3.00
82-80=B-	B-=2.67
79-77=C+	C+=2.33
76-73=C	C=2.00

72-70=C-	C-=1.67
69-67=D+	D+=1.33
66-63=D	D=1.00
62-60=D-	D-=0.67
59-0=E	E=0.00

General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of 73% (C) is required for general education credit.

PHI 2010 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with some key philosophical topics and arguments concerning knowledge, free will, the mind, the nature of morality, and the existence of God. Students will become adept at thinking critically, analyzing arguments, and writing clearly and persuasively.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: 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; and CRITICAL THINKING—students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Students will satisfy the CONTENT SLO by demonstrating a mastery of some key philosophical concepts as well as central arguments in the discipline. The COMMUNICATION SLO will be achieved by four papers (1000-1250 words each) and regular participation in discussion sections. Students will be required to explain and evaluate various philosophical views. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the CRITICAL THINKING SLO through the papers and discussions, both of which will be focused on topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. Papers will be graded on the basis of a student's comprehension of the relevant issues, development and cogent defense of her or his position, clarity of expression, and mechanics.

In short, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain some traditional philosophical positions and arguments, as well as common objections to them
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive and cogent arguments for particular philosophical positions
- Think critically and carefully about difficult and complex topic

Writing Requirement Credit

Students in this course can earn 4000 words towards the UF Writing Requirement (WR). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of 73% (C) or higher overall and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. Satisfactory completion of the writing component requires submission of all four papers and a grade of 77% (C+) or better on three out of four of them. A few things to note about the WR are the following:

- Written assignments that count toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments should include such elements as well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure, well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.
- Writing will be evaluated based on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. I will provide a detailed rubric that shows how we will evaluate assignments using these criteria (see the end of this syllabus).
- In-class writing assignments (including any done in discussion sections), class notes, and essay examinations may not be counted toward the 4,000 words.
- You may find it helpful to reach out to the UF Writing Studio for writing help: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

COVID-19 Recommendations

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations 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.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.ufl.edu for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. 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 to be evaluated.
- 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.

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 Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

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 zero for the assignment. 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.

ChatGPT/AI

Use of AIs such as ChatGPT to compose all or part of the assignments for this course is strictly prohibited. Please be aware that Canvas has TurnItIn software that automatically checks for signs that an AI was used to write your submissions. Beyond there, there are certain telltale signs of AI-generated responses for which the instructor and TAs will be on the lookout. Any assignment found to be generated by AI will automatically receive a zero, and the student will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

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. The use of smart phones during class is not permitted. 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>.

Canvas e-Learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>, click the **e-Learning in Canvas** button, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. You can then access the course e-Learning environment by selecting PHI 2010 from the **Courses** pull-down menu at the top of the page. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Please do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

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/>.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

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.*

In-Class Recording

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.

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 the 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.
- [GatorWell Health Promotion Services](#): For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- [Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

Course Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Any official changes to the schedule will be announced on Canvas, and the Canvas version of the syllabus will be modified. The syllabus is divided into weeks; the items listed for a given week are to be read before classes that week. Readings can be found in the course text (see above) unless they are marked as “provided on Canvas.”

Unit 1: Does God Exist?

Week 1: August 23, 25

- No reading

Week 2: August 28, 30; September 1

- Marylin Adams, “Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God”

- William Paley, "Natural Theology"

Week 3: September 6, 8 (No class September 4)

- Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian" (provided on Canvas)
- Optional: Neil Manson, "The Fine-Tuning Argument," pages 271-278 (provided on Canvas)

Unit 2: What Can We Know?

Week 4: September 11, 13, 15

- René Descartes, Meditations I-V

Week 5: September 18, 20, 22

- Nick Bostrom, "The Simulation Argument" (provided on Canvas)
- Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

Paper 1 Due by September 24 at 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)

Week 6: September 25, 27, 29

- G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World" (provided on Canvas)
- Keith DeRose and Ted A. Warfield, "Responding to Skepticism"

Unit 3: The Mind and the Self

Week 7: October 2, 4 (No class October 6)

- René Descartes, Meditation VI
- Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes's Myth" (provided on Canvas)

Week 8: October 9, 11, 13

- Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism"
- Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia" (provided on Canvas)

Week 9: October 16, 18, 20

- John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"
- Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"

Paper 2 due by October 22 at 11:59pm (submit on Canvas)

Week 10: October 23, 25, 27

- Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?"
- Marya Schectman, "Personhood and Personal Identity"

Unit 4: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Week 11: October 30; November 1, 3

- Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will" (provided on Canvas)
- Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

Unit 5: Morality

Week 12: November 6, 8 (No class November 10)

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Week 13: November 13, 15, 17

- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

Paper 3 Due by November 19 at 11:59pm (Submit on Canvas)

Unit 6: Existentialism

Week 14: November 20 (No class November 22, 24)

- Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd"

Week 15: November 27, 29; December 1

- Jenann Ismael, "The Ethical Importance of Death"
- Susan Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"

Week 16: December 4, 6

- Makeup Days

Paper 4 Due by December 10 at 11:59pm (Submit on Canvas)

WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A	B	C	D	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper does an excellent job of responding to the topic question and reflects a more than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does an excellent job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are clear and convincing • All the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are all well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does a good enough job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are for the most part clear and convincing. • Almost all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are generally well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper provides a merely sufficient response to the topic question and reflects a less than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does not adequately identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are only partially clear and convincing. • The content of the paper generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material. • Only some of the paper's claims are well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument is difficult to follow in places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are only marginally clear and convincing. • The content of the paper tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material. • None of the interpretations on which the paper's claims are based are cogent. • The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • It is unclear what the paper's main ideas are supposed to be. • How the content of the paper is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, and there is far too much irrelevant material. • None of the paper's claims are based on interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument is very difficult to follow.
<p>Grammar: Grammatical errors will incur deductions on a per-error basis, one point per error. The document <i>Basic Grammar for Writing Assignments</i> posted under the "Resources" tab discusses some common grammatical errors you must avoid.</p>				