

PHI 2010: Introduction to Philosophy
Class #: 27817

Class Meeting Information

Class Meeting Times:

- Tuesday, Period 7 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM)
- Thursday, Periods 7-8 (1:55 PM - 3:50 PM)

Class Meeting Location: Anderson Hall, 0013

Instructor Information

Instructor: Bob Beddor

Email: r.beddor@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday, after class, from 3-4:30pm, and also by appointment.

Office Location: Philosophy Department, Griffin-Floyd Hall

Phone: 734 730 9809

Note: the best way to contact me outside of class and office hours is by email

Overview

This course will introduce students to some of the major questions in philosophy. Topics include:

- Can we use philosophical arguments to prove or disprove the existence of God?
- How can we know anything about the world around us? Can we rule out the possibility that we are currently dreaming, or that we are caught in a computer simulation (as in *The Matrix*)?
- We often take for granted that we have free will. But what is free will, exactly? Is it compatible with the idea that all our actions are determined by physical processes?
- Will you be the same person in twenty years' time? Is it possible for you to survive memory loss or death?
- What are our ethical obligations to other people and the world around us?
- What is the meaning of life? (And what does this question even mean?)

While we will be reading many major philosophers' attempts to tackle these questions, throughout this course the emphasis will be on *you*: the goal is for each of you to wrestle with these questions and develop what you take to be the most cogent, well-supported answers.

General Education and Writing Requirement

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.

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.

Grading

The grade for the class will be a function of the following components:

Participation (15%)

Participation – asking questions, raising objections - is crucial to the experience of doing philosophy. The participation grade is based on your in-class participation over the course of the semester. In general, a good goal is to aim to try to ask (or answer) at least one question per class (it is fine if you ask more than one, and it is also fine if some weeks you do not ask any).

Weekly Online Questions (5%)

Every week there will be a few short online multiple-choice questions. The goal of this is to provide a useful refresher of the material we've covered that week. (Studies indicate that students learn best when they have regular opportunities to apply the lessons of the previous week.)

First Paper (Short Response) (20%)

The first paper assignment is to write a short response to one of the topics covered thus far in the class. It should be focused on a particular argument in one of the papers – you should briefly summarize the argument, and then engage with it critically, by either offering an original criticism of it, or extending the argument in some way. The response should only be 500 words– the idea is to boil your commentary/criticism down to the essentials. Suggested response paper topics, together with a detailed grading rubric, will be distributed closer to the deadline.

Second Paper (25%)

The second paper assignment is to write a somewhat longer paper tackling one of the main questions we've covered in class thus far. You will be expected to take a stand on one of the debates we've surveyed, and construct an argument in defense of your view. Suggested paper topics, together with a detailed grading rubric, will be distributed closer to the deadline.

Final Paper (35%)

The final paper is an opportunity to develop a longer, more sustained treatment of one of the topics covered in this class. The paper should offer a clear articulation and defense of your position, and respond to potential objections. Suggested paper topics, together with a detailed grading rubric, will be distributed closer to the deadline.

The breakdown for the final grade will be as follows:

Participation: 15%
Online questions: 5%
First Paper: 20%
Second Paper: 25%
Final Paper: 35%

If you have any questions at all about the assignments, please visit me in office hours or send me an email message! (The best way to contact me outside of class or office hours is via email.)

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/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-86=B+	B+=3.33
85-82=B	B=3.00
81-79=B-	B-=2.67
78-75=C+	C+=2.33
75-72=C	C=2.00
71-69=C-	C-=1.67
68-66=D+	D+=1.33
65-62=D	D=1.00
61-60=D-	D-=0.67
59-0=E	E=0.00

Expectations

Discussion Expectations

We want to create an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect in our classroom. This course emphasizes discussion and debate: I firmly believe that the best way to learn philosophy is to practice doing philosophy, which involves formulating hypotheses, raising questions, and considering objections.

In the course of our discussions, disagreements will naturally arise. That is fine; disagreement is an integral part of philosophical activity. That said, it is important to pay attention to the way you voice your disagreement with others; we want to ensure everyone feels respected even in the midst of disagreement. Here are some general guidelines to achieve this goal:

- Please try to listen to your classmates, and avoid interrupting them.
- When you disagree, please take care to challenge the idea being discussed, rather than the person.
- When you disagree with a position, try to articulate your grounds for disagreement (backing up your position with reasons is an integral part of doing philosophy).

Other Classroom Expectations

Please also avoid using cell phones or computers during class. If you are convinced that you learn best while using a computer, please talk to me – I may be willing to make an exception. However, studies suggest that most students are less productive when they bring their computers to class.

Readings

You will be expected to have read the assigned texts *before* coming to class. Many of the readings will be posted on the course website. You should also get a copy of the textbook, *Philosophy: Asking Questions – Seeking Answers*, by Stich & Donaldson.

Note: In this class, I'll be asking you to read a number of primary texts, some of which were written hundreds of years ago. This makes for very tough reading! If you find some of the readings dense and difficult, don't worry – you are not alone. Learning to read philosophy takes time, and one goal of this course will be to equip you with the background knowledge and skills to make sense of these challenging texts. In class, we'll work together to make sense of some particularly challenging parts of the text. And if you have questions about other sections that we do not discuss, please do not hesitate to ask questions! Chances are that many other students have a similar question.

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 do not hesitate to contact me.

Canvas e-Learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. 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.bluer.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 who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

COVID 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.

Class Recording Policy

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.

Health and Wellness Resources

- [U Matter, We Care](https://umatter.ufl.edu): 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](https://counselingandwellnesscenter.ufl.edu): 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](#).

GRADING RUBRIC FOR PAPERS

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: The document <i>Basic Grammar for Writing Assignments</i> posted under the "Resources" tab discusses some common grammatical errors you must avoid. Grammatical errors will incur deductions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improper formation of plurals and possessives (- 2 points) • Failure of agreement between subject and verb (- 2 points) • Run-on sentence (<i>Basic Grammar</i> §2) (- 4 points) • Unclear Pronoun Reference (<i>Basic Grammar</i> §4) (- 2 points) • Confusion of <i>it's</i> and <i>its</i> (- 2 points) • Sentence fragment (<i>Basic Grammar</i> §1) (- 4 points) • Faulty Modification (<i>Basic Grammar</i> §3) (- 2 points) • Faulty Parallelism (<i>Basic Grammar</i> §5) (- 2 points) 				

Schedule

PREAMBLE: INTRO TO INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

Thursday, Aug 24

What is this course? What is philosophy? What distinguishes good from bad arguments?

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, pp.7-22

Tuesday, Aug 29

Evaluating Philosophical Arguments

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, pp.7-22

UNIT 1: DOES GOD EXIST?

Thursday, Aug 31

The “first cause” argument and the design argument

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, pp.29-38

Tuesday, Sept 5

The “first cause” argument and the design argument continued

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, pp.38-46
Selections from Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (parts 2 & 5)

Optional additional reading:
Selection from Paley, *Natural Theology*

Thursday, Sept 7

The Ontological Argument and Pragmatic Arguments

- *Readings:*
- Stich & Donaldson, pp.38-46
- Saka, “Pascal’s Wager about God”

Tuesday, Sept 12

Ontological Argument and Pragmatic Arguments, Continued

Thursday, Sept 14

The problem of evil

- *Readings:*
Mackie, “Free Will and the Problem of Evil”
Selections from Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (part 10)

Optional additional reading:
Stich & Donaldson, pp.59-75

Tuesday, Sept 19

The problem of evil continued, Unit recap

- Readings:
Lewis, "Divine Evil"

UNIT 2: CAN WE KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL?

Thursday, Sept 21

The Skeptical Argument

-----**First paper due (short response) due (Boooo!)**

- Readings:
Descartes, "Meditation 1" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*
Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*, paragraphs 5-17

Optional additional reading:

Descartes, "Meditations 2 & 3" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*
Stich & Donaldson, chp. 5, pp.77-95

Tuesday, Sept 26

Can we refute the skeptic? Part I: Inference to the Best Explanation

- Readings:
Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chp. 1

Thursday, Sept 28

Can we refute the skeptic? Part II: Skepticism and Self-Refutation

- Readings:
Rinard, "Reasoning One's Way Out of Skepticism"

Tuesday, Oct 3

Recap of refuting the skeptic; is skepticism really so bad?

Thursday, Oct 5

Are skeptical scenarios really skeptical?

- Readings:
Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics"

Tuesday, Oct 10

Are skeptical scenarios really skeptical? Continued

- Readings:
Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics"
Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"

Thursday, Oct 12

Week 8: The Nature of Knowledge

- Readings:
Stich & Donaldson, Chp.8, pp.141-159

Optional Further Readings:

Dharmottara, Explanation of the Ascertainment of Valid Cognition D:4229, 9a2-3.

Feldman, Epistemology, Chps.2-3

Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

Tuesday, Oct 17

The Nature of Knowledge, Continued

- *Readings:*
Goldman, "The Causal Theory of Knowing"

UNIT 3: FREE WILL

Thursday, Oct 19

Do We Have Free Will?

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, chp. 9, "Do We Have Free Will?", pp.161-170
Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity" (selection from Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*)

Tuesday, Oct 24

Do We Have Free Will? Continued.

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, chp. 9, "Do We Have Free Will?", pp.161-170
Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity" (selection from Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*)

Thursday, Oct 26

Free Will, Alternative Possibilities, and Moral Responsibility

- *Readings:*
Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

Tuesday, Oct 31

Attitudes Towards Free Will Across Cultures

- *Readings:*
Sarkissian, Chatterjee, De Brigard, Knobe, Nichols, & Sirker, "Is Belief in Free Will a Cultural Universal?"

Second Paper Due (sigh...)

UNIT 4: Personal Identity

Thursday, Nov 2

Will You Be the Same Person in 20 Years? Is it Possible to Survive Death?

- *Readings:*
Selection from Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (first night)
Stich & Donaldson, pp.213-221

Tuesday, Nov 7

Will You Be the Same Person in 20 Years? Is it Possible to Survive Death? Recap

- *Readings:*
Selection from Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (first night)
Stich & Donaldson, pp.213-221

Thursday Nov 9

Personal Identity Continued

- *Readings:*
Selection from Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (second & third night)

Stich & Donaldson, pp.221-242

UNIT 5: ETHICS, VALUE, AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

Tuesday, Nov 14

Our Duties to Other People

- *Readings:*
Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Stich & Donaldson, pp.309-332

Thursday Nov 16

Our Duties to Other Creatures

- *Readings:*
Stich & Donaldson, pp.309-332
Vox article: "Is There a Moral Case for Eating Meat?"

Tuesday, Nov 21

Our Duties to Other People and Other Creatures, Continued

- *Readings:*
McMahan, "Eating Meat the Nice Way"

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 23 (Gobble gobble)

CONCLUDING UNIT: THE MEANING OF LIFE

Tuesday, Nov 28

The meaning of life

- *Reading:*
Nagel, "The Absurd"
Wolfe, "The Meanings of Lives"

Thursday, Nov 30

The meaning of life, continued

- *Reading:*
Stich & Donaldson, Chp.13

Tuesday, Dec 5

Review/Catch-Up

Final paper due (⊗)

Have a wonderful vacation! (Yayyyy!)