

## PHI 3400: Modern Philosophy

Fall 2024

Class # 25806

### Class Meeting Times and Locations

Tuesdays 11:45 AM – 1:40 AM, MAT 0115

Thursdays 12:50 AM – 1:40 PM, MAT 0115

**Instructor:** Dr. James Wetzel

Email: [james.wetzel@ufl.edu](mailto:james.wetzel@ufl.edu)

Office: Griffin-Floyd Hall, room TBA

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00 – 3:00 PM

**Course Description:** PHI 3400 is meant to introduce students to the several of the central issues and arguments of early modern philosophy, as well as to the art of reasoning well. We will accomplish these goals by a careful reading of some of the most seminal philosophical works of the early modern period. In these works, we will find discussions of ontology, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion.

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. A minimum grade of C (72%) is required for credit toward the Philosophy major or minor and for general education credit. For more details, see the section on “General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes” below.

**Course Goals:** This course is designed to introduce students to the philosophical climate of the early modern period and the central concerns thereof through the study of some of the major works of the most influential thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Students will learn about some of the major concepts and arguments which concerned the greatest minds of the early modern period. Such issues will include the nature of ideas, whether we have any innate ideas, what arguments there may be for the existence of God, whether and how we can be certain that we know anything at all, and where our (putative) knowledge comes from. Students will also learn to develop their own arguments and views regarding the philosophical questions studied in the course in a compelling fashion through both written work and in-class discussion.

**Course Objectives:** Students will demonstrate their competence 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 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 material in the course.

### Required Texts:

René Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Trans. Cress. Hackett, 1993. ISBN: 9780872201927

G. W. Leibniz. *Philosophical Essays*. Trans. Ariew and Garber. Hackett, 1989. ISBN: 9780872200623

John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Woolhouse. Penguin, 1997 ISBN:9780140434828

D. Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Steinberg. Hackett, 1993. ISBN: 9780872202290

## Evaluation and Expectations:

Participation: 10%

Paper I: 20%

Paper II: 20%

Paper III: 25%

Paper IV: 25%

**Participation:** Respectful participation is expected of everyone. This can take a variety of forms: participating in class discussions, asking questions in person or by email, attending office hours, etc. Each course meeting 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 about them carefully and critically prior to the class meeting. Attendance will be taken at the start of each course meeting and will count towards your participation grade.

**Papers:** You will write four papers for this course, due on 9/27, 10/18, 11/08, and 12/05. For each paper, you will be given the choice between several prompts, of which you must choose one and write a paper of between 1,000 and 1,500 words (approximately four to five pages) in response. Each paper is due at 11:59 PM on the date indicated for that assignment. Late work will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor (arranged a minimum of 24 hours in advance). Failure to submit an assignment in Canvas by its due date will result in a grade of '0' (zero) for that assignment. Papers will be evaluated in accordance with the writing assignment rubric at the end of this syllabus.

**Grade Scale:** The following grade scale will be used to determine 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
89-86=B+	B+=3.33
85-82=B	B=3.00
81-79=B-	B-=2.67
78-76=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

**General Education 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 C (72%) is required for general education credit.

PHH 3400 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with the thought of several of the figures who have significantly shaped philosophy as a discipline and a way of life. Philosophy as a field is perhaps more engaged with its own history than most other fields of inquiry. Since philosophers continue to address many of the same problems that concerned their predecessors and continue to draw upon the concepts and methods they employed, an understanding of the history of philosophy is essential to being a good philosopher. Students will come to understand how key early modern philosophers both defined and sought to answer problems in central areas of philosophy including epistemology, metaphysics and ontology, ethics, theology, and political philosophy.

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 several of the critical arguments and concepts within the discipline of philosophy. They will satisfy the communication SLO by writing four papers (1,000 to 1,500 words each) and by active participation in class discussions. In both cases, students will be required to explain and evaluate key philosophical views of historically significant thinkers in the discipline. Students will also satisfy the critical thinking SLO through both their papers and their participation in class discussions, both of which will focus on topics designed to test their critical thinking abilities. Papers will be graded on the basis of the student's clear and complete understanding of the topics raised in the readings and class discussions, ability to identify key aspects of the issues and arguments in question, and ability to develop and defend a cogent position thereon, as well as the clarity, organization, and mechanics necessary for the proper written expression of ideas.

**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](https://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.

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 0 (zero) for that 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.

**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 which can be found clearly explicated 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." 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.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who would like to request academic accommodations should contact the disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>) to receive an accommodation letter. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their needs 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](mailto: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 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.

### Academic Resources

*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).

*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 accordingly. The texts listed for a given course meeting are to be read before the class meets for that day.

Week 1:

Thursday 08/22: Course Introduction

Week 2:

Tuesday 08/27: Introduction to Medieval Scholastic/Aristotelian background assumed by all of our authors

Thursday 08/29: Descartes, *Meditation I*

Week 3:

Tuesday 09/03: Descartes, *Meditation II*; Discussion Section—Is Descartes the Meditator?

Thursday 09/05: Descartes, *Meditation III*

Week 4:

Tuesday 09/10: Descartes, *Meditation IV*; Discussion Section on the Cosmological Argument

Thursday 09/12: Descartes, *Meditation V*

Week 5:

Tuesday 09/17: Descartes, *Meditation VI*; Discussion Section—Is There a Cartesian Circle?

Thursday 09/19: Guidelines for paper writing, Paper I assigned

Week 6:

Tuesday 09/24: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* 1-7; Introduction to Leibniz

Thursday 09/26: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* 8-12

Friday 09/27: **Paper I due at 11:59 PM**

Week 7:

Tuesday 10/01: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics* 13-16, *Monadology* 1-11

Thursday 10/03: Leibniz, *Monadology* 12-25

Week 8:

Tuesday 10/08: Leibniz, *Monadology*, 53-73; Discussion Section on the pre-established harmony

Thursday 10/10: Leibniz, *Monadology*, 74-90; Paper II assigned

Week 9:

Tuesday 10/15: Locke, *Essay Book I*, chapters I-III; Introduction to ideas, species, & phantasms

Thursday 10/17: Locke, *Essay Book II*, chapters I-III & VI-VIII

Friday 10/18: **Paper II due at 11:59 PM**

Week 10:

Tuesday 10/22: Locke, *Essay Book II*, chapters IX-XIII

Thursday 10/24: Locke, *Essay Book II*, chapter XXI

Week 11:

Tuesday 10/29: Locke, *Essay Book II*, chapter XXII-XXIV

Thursday 10/31: Locke, *Essay Book II*, chapters XXV-XXVII; Paper III assigned

Week 12:

Tuesday 11/05: Hume, *Enquiry* I-III; Introduction to Hume

Thursday 11/07: Hume, *Enquiry* IV & V

Friday 11/08: **Paper III due at 11:59 PM**

Week 13:

Tuesday 11/12: Hume, *Enquiry* VI & VII

Thursday 11/14: Hume, *Enquiry* VIII & IX

Week 14:

Tuesday 11/19: Hume, *Enquiry X*

Thursday 11/21: Hume, *Enquiry XI & XII*; Paper IV assigned

Week 15:

Tuesday 12/03: Course Review and Wrap-Up

Friday 12/05: **Paper IV due at 11:59 PM**

### Writing Assessment Rubric

A	B	C	D	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• The introduction does an excellent job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper.</li><li>• The main ideas of the paper are clear and convincing</li><li>• All the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material.</li><li>• The paper's claims are all well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall, the paper responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.</li><li>• The introduction does a good enough job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper.</li><li>• The main ideas of the paper are for the most part clear and convincing.</li><li>• Almost all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material.</li><li>• The paper's claims are generally well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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.</li><li>• The introduction does not adequately identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper.</li><li>• The main ideas of the paper are only partially clear and convincing.</li><li>• The content of the paper generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material.</li><li>• Only some of the paper's claims are well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.<sup>7</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall, the paper only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class.</li><li>• The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper.</li><li>• The main ideas of the paper are only marginally clear and convincing.</li><li>• The content of the paper tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material.</li><li>• None of the interpretations on which the paper's claims are based are cogent.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overall, the paper does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class.</li><li>• The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper.</li><li>• It is unclear what the paper's main ideas are supposed to be.</li><li>• How the content of the paper is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, and there is far too much irrelevant material.</li><li>• None of the paper's claims are based on interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The argument is difficult to follow in places.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The argument is very difficult to follow.</li></ul>
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