

# PHP5785 Foundations of Analytic Philosophy

Class Number 30268 Fall 2024

*Each student is responsible for reading the complete course syllabus and being familiar with the policies and procedures set out therein. You should be sure to review it prior to the end of the drop/add period.*

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## 1. Basic information

### 1.1 Meeting times and location

Fridays periods 8 – 10 (3:00 PM – 6:00 PM)  
Griffin-Floyd 200

### 1.2 Instructor and contact information

D. Gene Witmer  
Email: [gwitmer@ufl.edu](mailto:gwitmer@ufl.edu)  
Web: <https://people.clas.ufl.edu/gwitmer>  
Office: 330A Griffin-Floyd Hall  
Office phone: (352) 273-1830

### 1.3 Office hours

Office hours are times set aside so that I am available for you to ask questions, discuss material, and so on. You do not need special appointments to show up for regular office hours. In case there are problems meeting during regular office hours and we need to meet, we can make appointments at other times.

Tuesdays and Wednesdays 3:30 – 5:00 PM  
And by appointment

Regular office hours are not held during holidays or after the last day of classes (during exam week). However, it is possible to make appointments during those times if needed. It is also possible to meet over Zoom as appropriate; I have a Zoom room (for “Ad Hoc Office Hours”) set aside for such:

To join Ad Hoc Office Hours when you have an appointment: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/97202458888>

Note that UF authentication is required to join this room.

### 1.4 Required texts

There are two required texts:

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Originally published in German in 1921. This is the translation by David Pears and Brian McGuinness. Published by Routledge (“Routledge Classics” series) in 2001. ISBN: 0415254086.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. Originally published posthumously in 1953. Wiley-Blackwell 4th edition 2009: Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte; revised 4th edition by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte. ISBN: 9781405159289.

Both should be available at the UF bookstore. There are, however, several different translations and editions of the two Wittgenstein texts. The ones specified above are the ones I am using and have ordered for the bookstore, but if you have different edition(s), that should be fine. In any case, you need to have copies of these in some form.

There are three other texts I have asked the bookstore to order as recommended but optional. They are:

Gottlob Frege and Michael Beaney (ed), *The Frege Reader*. Blackwell Publishers 1997. ISBN: 0631194452.

Bertrand Russell and David Pears (ed), *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*. Open Court 1985. ISBN: 0875484433.

A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*. Dover Publications, 2nd edition 1952. ISBN: 486200108.

Aside from the two Wittgenstein texts, all readings (including from the recommended texts) will be made available as PDFs on the Canvas site. See the link to the "Files" folder on the front page of the site. Complete reference information for all readings is available on the Canvas site, updated if and when we add anything.

## 2. Course overview

### 2.1 Course description

"Analytic Philosophy" is the label used for that sort of philosophy that developed in the first half of the 20th Century and became dominant in the English-speaking philosophical world up until the present day. There is little agreement on what the label signifies other than a common philosophical inheritance. That inheritance is precisely what this course covers: a survey of influential work by Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, and others. We will focus on methodological issues in philosophy and how theories of language, knowledge, and metaphilosophy have shaped the debate over the best way to proceed in addressing philosophical questions. Our goal is in part historical but more importantly philosophical: the hope is to gain a clear understanding of the arguments, theories, and questions that animated this literature and which continue to shape the dominant philosophical tradition today.

### 2.2 Subjects and readings

Below is the planned list of topics. For details on the readings, see the course schedule.

- Frege and Russell
- Wittgenstein and the *Tractatus*
- Logical positivism
- Carnap and Quine
- Later Wittgenstein and the *Investigations*

The initial schedule is provided on the Canvas page, but it may well be adjusted as we go along. I reserve the right to remove or add readings and adjust the schedule as needed to accommodate our progress through the material.

### 2.3 Learning objectives

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| (1) identify and describe those major developments in philosophy of the first half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century in issues in philosophy of language, epistemology, and metaphilosophy that constitute the shared heritage of what is currently understood as "analytic philosophy"; | Content           |
| (2) recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments and positions that played a determining role in the developments mentioned above; and  | Critical thinking |
| (3) present arguments and pursue debates about that early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century work on language, knowledge, and the nature of philosophy in a way that engages with contemporary concerns in those same areas of philosophy.   | Communication     |

### **3. Class routine**

#### 3.1 Schedule

The schedule for the course will be available as a PDF document on the Canvas site. If and when we need to make changes, those changes will be reflected on that document, which will also include information on when it was last updated.

#### 3.2 Lecture and discussion

Class sessions are a mixture of lecture and discussion. In my experience students learn best when these two things are not separated but mixed together. You are encouraged to ask questions or make comments at any point. If I think it best to leave the question or comment till later, I will ask you to wait, but usually I am happy to address your thoughts immediately.

I will normally come to class with an outline of topics and/or activities for us that day, though I might depart from it considerably depending on how things go.

#### 3.3 Participation and attendance

The best way to learn in philosophy is by taking an active role in thinking about, discussing, and writing on the readings and arguments presented. It is essential to appreciate the material that you make the effort to work your own way through it, doing your best to decide what you think about it and confronting those thoughts with questions and objections you encounter in discussion with other people. Because participation is in this way important, *I have a policy of "cold-calling" on students*. That is, I will call on people even if they don't volunteer, and even if others are volunteering. I do this as a matter of course, aiming to get everyone to participate. The reason I do it is to help you get past any reluctance you may have in articulate your thoughts in a challenging environment. I have seen many students in the past switch from being silent observers to eager participants as a result of being prodded to participate, and it is clear they benefit from being able to do so.

Unexcused absences for a graduate course are quite unacceptable. If you miss a class, excused or not, you need to take responsibility for finding out what you have missed. If you do have a good excuse for an absence or a missed assignment, you need to get in contact with me in a reasonable amount of time and make any relevant arrangements. Of course, if you are seriously ill, do not worry about that and seek medical attention immediately, letting me know later when it is feasible to do so. UF's general policy on attendance, including an official statement of what counts as an acceptable reason for missing class, can be found in the catalog at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. In general, I aim to give students the benefit of the doubt about these matters, but I may demand documentation on a case-by-case basis.

If illness or other disruptions render it unreasonable to expect you to hand in work by the due date, I will offer either an extension or a make-up opportunity.

## 4. Requirements

### 4.1 General expectations

As a student in this class, you are expected to

- be familiar with all policies and requirements as set out in the complete course syllabus
- attend and participate in all class sessions (unless excused for a legitimate reason)
- be aware of all deadlines throughout the semester
- stay informed by keeping up with all announcements made in class and via Canvas
- keep up with reading assignments and hand in work on time
- maintain academic integrity in all of your work—or risk failing the entire course
- be respectful of your classmates, even when engaged in lively critical dialogue with them
- inform the instructor promptly of any emergencies or problems that will affect your ability to do what is needed in the course ask questions and seek help when you need it

### 4.2 Assignments overview

There are four kinds of factors that determine your course grade:

- Class participation
- Two papers
- Two study question tasks
- Final take-home exam

For the ways these affect the course grade, see the section on course grade determination (§5.3). You can find more information on each factor in this section.

### 4.3 Class participation

A grade will be assigned for the quality of your class participation, where this will be determined by the quality of both your contributions to discussion in class and your online contributions to discussion boards if you make any such contributions. *You are not required to use the online discussion boards*, but if you use them, the quality of those contributions will count towards this grade.

There are enough students in this class (indeed: a very large number!) that I expect there will be many avenues of discussion you will want to pursue but won't have time to pursue in class, so it's probably a good idea to try to pursue some of those further on the discussion boards.

The quality of that participation is here understood in terms of your comprehension of the material under discussion as well as your skill at focusing on salient questions, evaluating arguments, and producing your own arguments.

### 4.4 Papers

You will write two narrowly focused philosophical papers. That is: they should be argumentative papers defending a specific thesis related to one of the issues that has come up in the class discussion or readings by that point. While this is a history class of a sort, I don't expect these papers to be focused on historical interpretation at all; they should instead engage with the issues raised by the figures we're reading. I do not require or expect you to look for outside sources in writing these papers and in fact generally discourage doing so, though I won't forbid it. (If you use any outside sources, you must provide adequate citation or risk being accused of academic dishonesty.) The theses you defend should be pretty narrow; they should be important to the material we have discussed, of course, but they should not be on the order of "here's why Frege's entire theory is wrong" or the like. A good strategy for making your

own work of the appropriate scope is to pick a thesis about a specific argument. So, for example, you might have as your thesis: "Frege's triviality argument for the need for sense relies on a false premise."

By way of size, you should aim for a paper between 1500 and 3000 words. Note that I am *not strict about word counts*, but I do give you these word counts as a target to aim for. Being able to trim excess text and stay concise is one of the skills you want to develop as a philosopher, so I do expect you to make a good effort to stay within those limits, but do not fret too much about these things. Devote your energy to the quality of the paper.

#### 4.5 Study question tasks

This semester I have decided to institute a new kind of assignment I am calling a "study question task." It is somewhat akin to a presentation without being a presentation. Here is the idea.

You will be divided into groups of three students each, and each group will have the job of doing *two* of these study question tasks. Each task requires that your group identify two claims or arguments made in the reading that seem especially important and prepare some "study questions" for them. More precisely, for each claim or argument you identify in the reading, your group should prepare:

1. A brief explanation of the claim or argument in your own words. Keep this brief – no more than 300 words at maximum.
2. Two questions about that claim or argument, where these are designed to help your fellow readers think about the claim or argument. Those questions can be of any of the following kinds:
  - Questions about how to understand the claim or argument (what it entails, how it is different from other claims, what strengths or weaknesses it may have, and so on).
  - Questions about how the current claim or argument relates to other claims or arguments made in other readings we have discussed (whether there is a conflict, if the argument of one reading helps with the claims of another reading, whether the goal or agenda of one philosopher is thwarted or supported by such and such a claim, and so on).
  - Questions about the plausibility of the claim or argument; these could be in effect questions that raise concerns about it in various ways.
  - Questions about the relevance of the claim or argument to issues that are much debated in current philosophy; these could be in effect questions about whether what one of these guys says might clarify a current debate, cause trouble for it, or the like.

So, each study question task will have six things in it:

Item #1: Basic exposition. Question 1. Question 2.

Item #2 : Basic exposition. Question 1. Question 2.

In trying to decide what questions to set out, think about the questions that occur to you after having done the reading and thinking about it first, and then think about whether some of those would have been useful for you to focus on in approaching the reading the first time.

The idea here is not to set up a presentation to give during class but to have something that you can share with your fellow students prior to their doing the reading in question. So, your group will need to do the assigned reading at least a week before others in the class do that reading. More precisely, if the reading is assigned to be discussed in class on date **N**, you need to complete and submit your study question task by date **N-7**.

For example, if your group's assigned reading is assigned to be discussed in class on October 4<sup>th</sup>, you need to have your study question task handed by a week before — on September 27<sup>th</sup>. And that means that your group will need to start working on this by two weeks before – on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

The results of your study question task will be handed in as an assignment on Canvas (only one of you in the group has to submit it) and then I share it with the rest of the class. By way of grading these, the grading will be relatively light, and the grade will be shared by all members of the group.

Finally, let me just mention that this is a new experiment on my part, so please bear with me if it goes poorly or I have to make adjustments to improve it.

#### 4.6 Final take-home exam

PHP 5785 is one of the courses satisfying area distribution requirements in our program and, given program rules, must include some kind of comprehensive exam. I have found that a week-long take-home exam at the end of the semester works well for this kind of test.

The exam will be made up of three different sets of questions, where you must choose a certain number from each set to answer. Questions will range over the entire course. They do not require originality on your part — that's what makes this much easier than a paper — but they do require careful and accurate exposition. You should definitely not look at any external sources for your work on the exam, nor should you talk to other students in the class about the exam. Answers are expected in the form of short essays. The questions are distributed after the last day of class, and your exam is returned with each portion given a grade, the average of which makes up the exam grade.



## 5. Grading information

### 5.1 General grade information

For graduate courses used to satisfy requirements towards the MA or PhD, it is generally expected that a student should earn a B grade or better. Other information on current UF grading policies in general can be found in the UF catalog at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

The grading system I use is rather different from that used by many other instructors. I will use the Canvas gradebook, but the way I use it makes use of the grade scale described below. You'll see that on the Canvas gradebook every graded assignment is worth 4 points total; you should see the appropriate letter grade show up, but the underlying mechanics uses 4 points, multiple of 4 points, and percentages of those point totals.

### 5.2 Grade scale

Many faculty use a grade scale based on 100 points—defining an A as a score between (for example) 94 and 100, an A- as 90 to 93, and so on. For various reasons I am convinced this is not a good method for calculating grades in a philosophy class. Instead, all grades in my classes are based on the 4-point scale for letter grade values, where an A is 4 points, an A- is 3.67 points, and so on.

Assigned work is initially assigned a letter grade; they are then entered into the gradebook as numeric values. Going from the grade symbol to the numeric value looks like this:

| Letter | Numeric |  | Letter | Numeric |
|--------|---------|--|--------|---------|
| A      | 4       |  | C      | 2       |
| A-     | 3.67    |  | C-     | 1.67    |
| B+     | 3.33    |  | D+     | 1.33    |
| B      | 3       |  | D      | 1       |
| B-     | 2.67    |  | D-     | 0.67    |
| C+     | 2.33    |  | E      | 0       |

If you get a B+ on a particular assignment, for example, I record it as 3.33. Each graded element is given a number in this way.

For the course grade, each element is multiplied by its percentage weight for the course grade and the results summed for the course grade as a numeric value. The result is a numeric value between 0 and 4. That numeric value then needs to be turned back into a letter grade, and there are various options for how one might do that. For example, suppose someone has a numeric course grade of 3.44. Should that count as a B+ or as an A-? An A- is worth 3.67 (more than 3.44) but a B+ is worth 3.33 (less than 3.44). So where should the threshold be set? One way to think about this is to think that earning an A- should require getting something *at least halfway* between the values for a B+ and an A-. Halfway between B+ (3.33) and A- (3.67) is 3.5, so we could require 3.5 or better for an A-.

On this approach, the threshold to get an A would be halfway between A- (3.67) and A (4), which is 3.835, and the threshold to get a B instead of a B- would be 2.835, and so on. On this scale, then, your final numeric course grade (or the percentage equivalent, as Canvas deals with percentages only) is turned into a letter grade according to the following table:

| Numeric greater than or equal to | Percentage greater than or equal to | Letter |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 3.835                            | 95.88%                              | A      |

|       |        |    |
|-------|--------|----|
| 3.495 | 87.38% | A- |
| 3.165 | 79.13% | B+ |
| 2.835 | 70.88% | B  |
| 2.495 | 62.38% | B- |
| 2.165 | 54.13% | C+ |
| 1.835 | 45.88% | C  |
| 1.495 | 37.38% | C- |
| 1.165 | 29.13% | D+ |
| 0.835 | 20.88% | D  |
| 0.165 | 4.13%  | D- |
| 0     | 0.00%  | E  |

### 5.3 Course grade determination

The course grade is determined by the following factors with the indicated percentages:

|                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Class participation      | 10%            |
| Two middle-sized papers  | 40% (20% each) |
| Two study question tasks | 20% (10% each) |
| Final take-home exam     | 30%            |

## 6. Policies

### 6.1 Attendance and make-up policy

Unexcused absences for a graduate course are quite unacceptable. If you miss a class, excused or not, you need to take responsibility for finding out what you have missed. If you do have a good excuse for an absence or a missed assignment, you need to get in contact with me in a reasonable amount of time and make any relevant arrangements. Of course, if you are seriously ill, do not worry about that and seek medical attention immediately, letting me know later when it is feasible to do so. UF's general policy on attendance, including an official statement of what counts as an acceptable reason for missing class, can be found in the catalog at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. In general, I aim to give students the benefit of the doubt about these matters, but I may demand documentation on a case-by-case basis.

If illness or other disruptions render it unreasonable to expect you to do your in-class presentation as scheduled or to hand in work by the due date, I will offer either an extension or a make-up opportunity.

### 6.2 Academic honesty

As stated in the UF Student Honor Code [<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>], all UF students are bound by the following "Honor Pledge"

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student 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 policy in my classes for academic dishonesty is simple:

#### **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

All incidents are reported to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

**CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY MEANS AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE.**

In submitting a report of academic dishonesty I recommend *at minimum* a failing grade for the course and cite this warning in the syllabus.

If you are at all unsure whether something might violate the code, it is your responsibility to find out. Please consult the code and/or ask the instructor.  
Do not be afraid to ask!

In philosophy classes, the most common kind of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. In academic writing (including any writing exercise, essay, or paper you write in this class) if you use an idea you got from someone else—whether it's one of the assigned readings, another student, something you saw online, or the like—you are obliged to inform the reader of the source of that idea. Failure to do so is plagiarism. (For information on how to cite sources, see §7.2 on basic writing assistance.)

If you are ever tempted to cheat, please keep in mind that it would be better to get a failing grade for a particular assignment than to get both a failing grade for the entire course and a record of academic dishonesty on file with the University of Florida.

### 6.3 Academic honesty and collaboration

The honor code specifies a number of activities that constitute academic dishonesty as well as the sanctions (that is, penalties) that may result, including suspension and expulsion. Please note that *collaboration in this class is forbidden unless stated otherwise.*

In this class we actually have an explicitly collaborative assignment in the form of the study question tasks; see above. But no collaboration is permitted on either of the papers or the final take-home exam.

This prohibition on collaboration does not mean that you cannot make use of ideas from others that arise during the class, *so long as you give credit in an appropriate way.* For instance, in class discussion a student might say something that you want to use in your paper. You can refer to that idea in your work, so long as you include a reference like this:

as suggested in class discussion on March 1, 2022.

You can also cite the work of other students when that work is put online for the class to see. In that case, you might include a reference like this:

as suggested by Abigail LaFey on Canvas on March 1, 2022.

### 6.4 AI as an outside source

A recent issue in college work is raised by the advent of a certain kind of artificial intelligence—namely, the Large Language Models most famously illustrated by ChatGPT. As you no doubt are aware, ChatGPT is an application that does an astonishingly good job of appearing to be an intelligent interlocutor, and it is possible to ask it to write things for you that meet certain descriptions. ("Write me an essay on the dangers of grade inflation!") As a result, I count ChatGPT—and any relevantly similar AI application—as a kind of outside source one might use as a student but with the following difference. Unlike the external sources described in §6.4, where you are discouraged from using them but are not prohibited from using them, the rule for this particular kind of outside source is different:

#### **AI SOURCES PROHIBITED**

The use of ChatGPT or similar AI applications **in generating text for any assignment** in this course is strictly prohibited.

This includes all writing assignments, including both graded papers and ungraded writing exercises.

Use of such counts as academic dishonesty and merits the standard penalty for academic dishonesty, namely, a failing grade for the entire course.

There are various telltale signs of a ChatGPT generated essay, but it is true that they are far from conclusive. Here, however, is something that is a very good method of detection. If you did not write the paper yourself, you will have a hard time explaining it in person. Let me make this clear: *I reserve the right, for any written work you hand in for an assignment, to require you to meet with me in person immediately to answer questions about your written work so that I can establish the degree of your understanding of what you handed in.* If you cannot talk about your work in a way that makes it believable that you are the author, I may then require you to write about the same topic in my office or another controlled environment where you cannot make use of external aids. If it gets to that point, I

reserve the right *to substitute as a grade for the original written assignment an assessment of your verbal presentation and whatever writing you do in the controlled environment.*

I am sorry to have to issue this kind of threat, but let me say something about why this is the policy. One of the most important skills developed in a philosophy class is the ability to write and think clearly about tricky issues. Use of ChatGPT or similar applications will take away the primary method of gaining that skill—letting something else do the hard work of formulating points, seeing connections between points, and assessing the merit of various arguments. I understand that some professors see ChatGPT as a technology that might be fruitfully used as a learning tool, and I won't rule that out, but for now I don't see how it can be used without making it too easy to succumb to the temptation to not do the work in writing and thinking for oneself that is crucial to developing the cognitive and verbal skills that you should be developing.

One other comment about ChatGPT and Large Language Models in general. If you know the basic story behind how they work, you might see them as a kind of fantastic *imitation* machine: they take what others have said already and says something that is aimed at fitting the patterns evident in what others have already said. Now consider what you are trying to do when trying to answer philosophical questions. Is your goal to say things that fit the patterns evident in what others have already said? Recall that your work in this class will be to try to provide your own, original arguments for positions regarding the issues we will discuss; you cannot let your work be guided by the idea of imitating the patterns in what others have already said.

#### 6.5 Help with papers

I am happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss your work in progress on philosophy papers. I have a policy, however, that I will *not* look at any actual *drafts* of those papers. You can bring to our meeting a draft and/or notes on your paper and talk through what you are doing in the paper instead.

The reason for this policy is that I have learned from (frustrating) experience that commenting on actual student drafts often does more harm than good. Students find it very hard to resist reacting to such comments by thinking that their job is to make no changes in the paper other than those that are direct responses to specific comments made by the professor. And this, I can tell you, is not a good approach. Most of the time, the revisions you need to do are much more extensive than that, and it is often a good idea just to start a new file—a blank document—and start writing again, as opposed to constant tinkering with what you already wrote.

#### 6.7 Disability 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/>]. It is important for you to share your accommodation letter with your instructor so we can discuss any special access needed as early as possible in the semester.

#### 6.8 Course evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful [<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>] feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Please note that these evaluations are anonymous and only made available to the instructor after the final grades for the course have been submitted. I always read through all of these evaluations so as to find ways to improve the course and I encourage you to complete one at the assigned time.

You will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

Public data providing summaries of course evaluation results are available online at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.