

Philosophy 5935: Proseminar Syllabus

PHI 5935; Section 15926
Fall 2024
Wednesdays 3:00pm - 6:00pm
Griffin-Floyd Hall, Room 0200

Instructor Information

Chris Dorst
cdorst@ufl.edu
Office: 312 Griffin-Floyd Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm, Wednesdays 1-2pm
Phone (office): (352) 273-1813

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize incoming graduate students with the expectations and standards of graduate level work in philosophy. In particular, it aims to develop the tools necessary to read, write, and converse about philosophy at the graduate level. We will study and discuss a wide range of papers, drawn from many areas of philosophy and written in a variety of philosophical styles.

Each student will give three presentations: two of them will be co-presented with another student, and one of them will be solo. The paired presentations will occur in roughly the first half of the semester, and the solo presentations in the second half. The readings for the paired presentations are pre-selected (see the schedule at the end of the syllabus). The readings for the solo presentations are to be chosen by the presenting student in consultation with myself.

Students will be asked to write a short paper every week in which they are *not* assigned to present (except for the first and last weeks). The papers should be between 500 and 1000 words and can discuss any aspect of the reading. Papers are due at the start of each class. I will drop your two lowest short paper grades at the end of the semester.

Students will also be asked to write a final paper of roughly 3500-4000 words. Ideally this will be related to the paper that the student has selected for their solo presentation.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Critically read philosophy articles and identify the thesis, arguments, and potential weak points
- Contribute effectively to class discussions
- Comfortably give presentations to the rest of the class
- Structure a philosophy paper in a manner that is clear, concise, and rhetorically effective

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the

University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'"

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor. **Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course.** Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

In-Class Expectations

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

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

- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.
- If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.
- Continue to regularly visit coronavirus.UFHealth.org and coronavirus.ufl.edu for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

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 4542 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.

Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575

University Police Department:

392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Course Texts

- None. Readings will be provided as PDFs on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation: 5%

Presentations: 30% total (3 presentations: 10% each)

Short Papers: 45% total (9 short papers, lowest 2 dropped: roughly 6.5% each)

Final Paper: 20%

Participation

Respectful participation in class discussions is expected of everyone. Each class 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 critically about them beforehand.

Presentations

Each student will give three presentations in the course, two of which will be paired with another student, and one of which will be solo. For paired presentations, it is the job of both students to divide the work evenly between them. Paired presentations will occur in Weeks 2-7; solo presentations will occur in Weeks 8-13.

The readings for paired presentations are pre-selected (see the schedule below) and represent a variety of classic philosophy papers, on a variety of topics, using a variety of methodologies. The readings for solo presentations are to be selected by the presenting student, in consultation with myself, at least a week before the presentation is to occur. The intention is for them to be related to the Final Paper that the student will write.

Each presentation itself can be in whatever form you like: it may involve a handout, a Powerpoint presentation, or simply some prepared notes and use of the chalkboard. The goal of the presentation is to provide an accurate summary of the reading, set the stage for group discussion, and help guide that discussion. Your grade will be determined based on how well your presentation accomplishes these things.

Short Papers

Every week that you are *not* assigned to do a presentation (except for the first and last weeks), you will be asked to submit a short paper on the assigned reading. The paper should aim to do more than merely summarize the reading: it should present some sort of avenue for further work. For example, it might present an objection to part of the argument in the reading, suggest an alternative argument that would serve the author's purposes better, articulate a counterexample, etc. They do not need to involve outside research (though you are of course welcome to do so). As a guideline, I would expect each of these papers to be between 500 and 1000 words.

I will drop your two lowest short paper grades over the course of the semester. This means that if on some week you find yourself to be exceptionally busy, you can forgo writing a short paper that week and just opt to receive a 0 on it. But don't do this more than twice!

Final Paper

As a final assignment, you will be asked to develop a longer piece of roughly 3500-4000 words that makes a contribution to some philosophical debate. This piece can be based on one of the shorter papers you wrote from earlier in the semester, but it need not be. Ideally it will be related to the reading you have selected for your solo presentation, and it ought to involve significantly more outside research (reading of other papers, SEP entries, etc.) than is expected for the short papers.

Grading

Course grades are assigned on a pass/fail basis. Numerically, the minimum passing grade is 80%.

Course Schedule and Readings

The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Any official changes to the schedule will be announced on Canvas. The syllabus is divided into weeks; the items listed for a given week are to be read before class that week.

Week 1: August 28

- Freedom and Resentment (P. F. Strawson)
 - Presentation: Chris

Week 2: September 4

- Moral Saints (Susan Wolf)
 - Presentation: Students A and B

Week 3: September 11

- Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives (Philippa Foot)
 - Presentation: Students C and D

Week 4: September 18

- What is it Like to be a Bat (Thomas Nagel) *and* Is There Anything it is Like to be a Bat? (Peter Hacker)
 - Presentation: Students E and F

Week 5: September 25

- Real Patterns (Daniel Dennett)
 - Presentation: Students A and D

Week 6: October 2

- The Paradoxes of Time Travel (David Lewis)
 - Presentation: Students B and E

Week 7: October 9

- Other Minds (J. L. Austin)
 - Presentation: Students C and F

Week 8: October 16

- TBD (selected by Student A)
 - Presentation: Student A

Week 9: October 23

- TBD (selected by Student B)

- Presentation: Student B

Week 10: October 30

- TBD (selected by Student C)
 - Presentation: Student C

Week 11: November 6

- TBD (selected by Student D)
 - Presentation: Student D

Week 12: November 13

- TBD (selected by Student E)
 - Presentation: Student E

Week 13: November 20

- TBD (selected by Student F)
 - Presentation: Student F

Week 14: December 4

- Make-up Day