

Philosophy of Social Science (PHI 3420)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will consider core questions in the philosophy of social science, with an emphasis on the explanation of social facts. How should we go about explaining social facts, such as the fact that the crime rate is lower in Canada than in the United States? Can we explain such facts entirely by appeal to facts about individuals—such as what they believe and want—or do we need to appeal to facts about social structures as well? What *are* social structures, anyway? In exploring these questions, we will engage closely with both recent and classic work in the philosophy of social science.

MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:50-1:40 PM
Matherly Hall 113

INSTRUCTOR

David Gray Grant, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
University of Florida
david.grant@ufl.edu
Office hours: TBA
Office location: 330 Griffin Floyd Hall

REQUIRED TEXTS

This course has one required text:

Garfinkel, A. (1990). *Forms of explanation: Rethinking the questions in social theory*. Yale University Press. ISBN-10: 0300049021.

All other materials will be posted to Canvas.

COURSE WEBSITE

This course is supplemented by online content in the Canvas e-Learning environment. PDF readings, an electronic copy of the syllabus, and assignment submission portals can be found on the course website.

- 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 3681 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 or <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>.

- Please do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues (I am unlikely to be able to help you!).

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Announcements

Course announcements will be posted on Canvas. You are responsible for checking Canvas at least once a week to make sure that you do not miss important announcements.

Contacting your instructor

Please feel to reach out to me directly by email (david.grant@ufl.edu) if you have any questions (or would just like to chat about the course).

- I make effort to respond to email from students within two (2) business days. Note that emails do sometimes get lost – due to spam filtering, for instance. Please do send me another email or come up to me after class if you do not hear back within two business days (I promise I am not ignoring you intentionally!).

ASSESSMENT

Papers (50% / 500 points)

You will write two papers in response to prompts that will be provided on Canvas. These papers will be worth 200 and 300 points, respectively.

Final exam (30% / 30 points)

The final exam will be a take-home short essay exam. The questions will concern the readings and topics we have discussed over the entire semester.

Participation (20% / 200 points)

20% of your final grade will be determined by the quantity and quality of your participation in the course. Activities that will contribute to your participation grade include regularly attending lecture, participating in small-group and full-class discussions during lecture, and submitting prewritten contribution assignments (described below).

Participation grade

You will receive a letter grade for participation. Below is a summary of course standards for different letter grades (borderline cases will receive “+” or “-” grades as appropriate):

- A: Consistent attendance and outstanding participation. Highly engaged during lecture, with active participation in small group discussions and frequent constructive contributions to full-class discussions. In-class and prewritten contributions reflect excellent understanding of and critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.
- B: Consistent attendance and good participation. Moderately engaged during lecture, with active participation in small group discussions and occasional constructive contributions to full-class

discussions. In-class and prewritten contributions reflect substantial understanding of and critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.

- C: Inconsistent attendance and minimally adequate participation. Minimally engaged during lecture. In-class and prewritten contributions reflect limited understanding of/critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.
- D or F: Inadequate participation/attendance.

Participation grades will be determined at the end of the semester. However, please feel free to check in with me at any time about how you are doing. If you are unsure how to participate actively or find it difficult to do so, please schedule a meeting with me so that we can discuss strategies. I'm here to help!

Poor conduct in class will result in a 10% deduction from your participation grade. Examples of poor conduct include arriving late, disruptive behavior, falling asleep, failing to participate in small group activities, unapproved laptop/smartphone/tablet use, sending text messages, checking email, etc.

Note that the "Roll Call Attendance" grade that Canvas automatically generates is not directly related to your Participation grade in the class.

Prewritten contribution assignments

To set you up for success, I am asking you to submit a prewritten contribution to the discussion each week based on your reading of the assigned text. These can be short—a few sentences to a paragraph—and more informal than a paper or other formal writing assignment would be. Further instructions will be provided at the beginning of the semester.

The prewritten contributions will serve a few different goals. They will:

1. ensure that you always have something prepared in advance that you can bring up in our in-class discussions (this should make it easier for you to participate);
2. give me a better idea what I need to focus on during lecture; and
3. give you a way to demonstrate your engagement with the readings, and so improve your participation grade, that does not involve speaking in front of a large group (which some students find difficult¹).

Your prepared contributions will be due on Canvas each Monday at 11:59 PM (on weeks where there is an assigned reading only).

Prewritten contributions will be graded for completion. You can miss two without penalty; missing more than two will result in a 10% deduction from your participation grade. I will not assign letter grades to each submission, but the overall quality of your submissions will partly determine your participation grade in the course.

GRADING SCALE

¹ If that sounds like you, I strongly encourage you to come to office hours so we can discuss other strategies—submitting prewritten contributions is intended as a *supplement* to in-class participation, rather than a *substitute* for it.

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>.

Points	Grade Scale	Grade Value
940 - 1000	94 - < 100 = A	A=4.0
900 - < 940	90 - < 94 = A-	A-=3.67
870 - < 900	87 - < 90 = B+	B+=3.33
840 - < 870	84 - < 87 = B	B=3.00
800 - < 840	80 - < 84 = B-	B-=2.67
770 - < 800	77 - < 80 = C+	C+=2.33
740 - < 770	74 - < 77 = C	C=2.00
700 - < 740	70 - < 74 = C-	C-=1.67
670 - < 700	67 - < 70 = D+	D+=1.33
640 - < 670	64 - < 67 = D	D=1.00
600 - < 640	60 - < 64 = D-	D-=0.67
0 - < 600	0 - < 60 = E	E=0.00

To receive a given grade, you must meet or exceed the lower threshold specified; for instance, to get an 'A' you must score at least 940 points. Neither points nor grades will be rounded.

See <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/> for more information about UF grading policies.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes:

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain key philosophical questions, theories, and arguments concerning the explanation of social facts. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.
- Identify, describe, and explain arguments addressing key philosophical questions about the explanation of social facts. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Read, analyze, and discuss complex philosophical texts. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments addressing key philosophical questions about the explanation of social facts. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.
- Formulate original arguments, anticipate objections, and respond in a conscientious fashion. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective responses to key philosophical questions about the explanation of social facts. Assessed by Papers, Exams, and Participation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

COVID-19

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.

University Honesty Policy

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 (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-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 or TAs in this class.

Academic Dishonesty

All sources and assistance used in preparing your papers and presentations must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. Please review the guidelines on attribution and plagiarism found here: <https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/copyright/plagiarism>. The web creates special risks here. Cutting and pasting even a few words from a web page or paraphrasing material without a reference constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure how to refer to something you find on the internet, you can always give the URL.

You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Repeat offenders may be penalized by suspension or expulsion from the university.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). 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.

Classroom Conduct

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are

provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Laptop and Cellphone Policy

Laptop and cellphone use is prohibited in this class. First-time violations will receive a verbal warning. Subsequent violations will yield a loss of participation points.

Attendance, Illness, Religious Holidays, and Twelve Day Rule

Requirements for class attendance, religious holidays, 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>.

Excerpt from the statement on absences:

“Absences count from the first class meeting. In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.”

Course evaluation process

“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/>.”

Campus Resources

Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact 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.

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.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Please note that the following is tentative and subject to change.

Please see Canvas for an up-to-date schedule and list of readings.

Week 1 (1/13, 1/15, 1/17): Introduction to the course

- Brian Epstein, "Individualism: a recipe for warding off 'spirits'" (Canvas)
- Frank Jackson and Philip Pettit, "Structural Explanation in Social Theory," pages 97–105 only (Canvas)
- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, Introduction (pages 1–20)

Week 2 (1/22, 1/24): Explanatory relativity

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 1 ("Explanatory Relativity")

Week 3 (1/27, 1/29, 1/31): Explanatory relativity

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 2 ("Reductionism")
- Jessie Singer, *There Are No Accidents*, chapter 1 ("Error") (Canvas)

Week 4 (2/3, 2/5, 2/7): Reductive explanation

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 2 ("Reductionism")

Week 5 (2/10, 2/12, 2/14): Reductive explanation

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 2 ("Reductionism")
- Draft of paper 1 due 2/16

Week 6 (2/17, 2/19, 2/21): Social structural explanation

- Sally Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?" (Canvas)
- Paper 1 workshop on 2/17
- Paper 1 due 2/23

Week 7 (2/24, 2/26, 2/28): Libertarianism and social explanation

- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (excerpts)

Week 8 (3/3, 3/5, 3/7) : Libertarianism and social explanation

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 3 (“Individualism in Social Thought”)

Week 9 (3/10, 3/12, 3/14): Libertarianism and social explanation

- Alan Garfinkel, *Forms of Explanation*, chapter 3 (“Individualism in Social Thought”)

Week 10: Spring break

Week 11 (3/24, 3/26, 3/28): Liberal egalitarianism and social explanation

- Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Equality"

Week 12 (3/31, 4/2, 4/4): What do IQ tests measure?

- Ned Block and Gerald Dworkin, “IQ: Heritability and Inequality, Part I,” sections 1–2, 3–5, and 7–8
- Paper 2 draft due 4/3
- Paper 2 workshop on 4/4

Week 13 (4/7, 3/9, 4/11): What do IQ tests measure?

- Gideon Lewis-Kraus, “Can Progressives Be Convinced That Genetics Matters?” (Canvas)
- Paper 2 due 4/13

Week 14 (4/14, 4/16, 4/18): Social ontology

- Sally Haslanger, “Tracing the Sociopolitical Reality of Race” (Canvas)
- Quayshawn Spencer, “Are Folk Races Like Dingoes, Dimes, or Dodos?” (Canvas)

Week 15 (4/21, 4/23): Final exam review

- Final exam due 4/27