

Introduction to Philosophy

NOTE: it is your responsibility to read this document carefully. This is an agreement between you and your instructor. If you email me about something that is obviously stated in the syllabus, you will either receive no answer or I will reply, simply, "Read the syllabus!" However, if you read the syllabus and you still do not have an answer, then email me with your question.

I Course Information

- Course number: PHI 2010.
- Class 16243, section 201A.
- Classes:
 - When: Mondays through Fridays, period 3 (11:00 AM – 12:15 PM)
 - Where: Anderson Hall 019.
- Instructor:
 - Rodrigo Borges
 - Office: Griffin–Floyd Hall, room 314.
 - Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 12:30pm – 1:30pm (or by appointment).
 - Contact Information: rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu.

2 Catalog Course Description

In this course, students will be introduced to the nature of philosophy, philosophical thinking, major intellectual movements in the history of philosophy, including topics from the western philosophical tradition, and various problems in philosophy. Students will strengthen their intellectual skills, become more effective learners, and develop broad foundational knowledge.

3 Student Learning Outcomes

Students will (i) develop critical thinking skills (ii) demonstrate an understanding of classical western philosophical views; and (iii) analyze, explain, and evaluate foundational concepts of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

4 Course Goals

This course satisfies a General Education Requirement (Humanities). 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 is required for general education credit.

We will accomplish these objectives by introducing students to the main topics of Western Philosophy. We will do this by presenting students with classical readings touching on some of the core questions in this tradition. A further goal is to introduce students to the methods and tools used in this literature. In particular, students will learn how to present and evaluate philosophical and non-philosophical arguments.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to acquire while completing a General Education course at the University of Florida. The SLOs fall into three categories: content, communication and critical thinking.

Program Student Learning Outcomes

Category	Institutional Definition	Institutional SLO
Content	Content is knowledge of the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.	Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.
Critical Thinking	Critical thinking is characterized by the comprehensive analysis of issues, ideas, and evidence before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.	Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.
Communication	Communication is the development and expression of ideas in written and oral forms.	Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area.

This course also satisfies a 4.000 word Writing Requirement. This requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. To that end, instructor and teaching assistants will evaluate and provide feedback on all of the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization

5 Textbook

All readings will be made available in Canvas.

Recommended Reading

1. A terrific guide to general writing rules is Strunk and White's 'The Elements of Style.' The first edition is available online for free: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>.
2. A more recent style manual is Steven Pinker's 'Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century.' The book can be found anywhere books are sold.
3. The philosopher Jim Pryor (UNC) has his suggestions on how to read philosophy freely available [here](#); he has also published suggestions on how to write philosophy [here](#).

6 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.

Attendance is required (see below for details) and expected.

Requirements for class attendance 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>.

This course will NOT be synchronously taught on Zoom.

7 Course Requirements

Six different instruments will be used in order to measure student progress through the course. The name of each instrument, and the relative weight each of them carries in determining your final grade is the following; a brief description of each instrument follows.

Assignment	Total Number	% of Course Grade
Short Writing Assignments	2	25%
Writing Exercises	2	25%
Midterm	1	15%
Final	1	15%
Presentation	1	15%
Attendance	28	5%

7.1 Written Work (SWAs and WEs)

Writing Assignments are assessed on several different factors (the rubric can be found at the end of this document):

1. *Comprehension*: whether you understand accurately the material you are writing about.
2. *Clarity*: whether you write in a way that can be understood by others, avoids ambiguity, and is focused and organized.
3. *Mechanics*: whether you avoid grammatical or formal errors.
4. *Thesis Support*: whether you provide good reasons to believe the thesis you advance in your essay.
5. *Defense against Objections*: whether you anticipate how someone might object to what you say and defend it against those objections.

When grades are released for your SWAs and WEs, you will probably look first to see what grade you received. That is understandable. But you will be doing yourself no favors if you don't also look at the other feedback on your work, since that is what you will learn from.

When you review your graded work, you will always find:

1. The grade and the specific marks on the rubric.
2. A general comment on your performance.

More often than not, you will also find:

3. In-text or inline comments on the text itself.

Make sure you read that feedback; we provide it so as to enable you to improve your writing skills.

7.1.1 Short Writing Assignments (SWAs)

There will be three (2) short (1500 words) writing assignments. Each SWA will either ask you to present someone else's argument in your own words, or they will ask you to evaluate someone else's argument. The lowest grade will be dropped.

No outside readings will be required for SWAs. A *sample SWA* is available on Canvas.

Students must complete ALL SWAs in order to satisfy the Writing Requirement for the course.

7.1.2 Writing Exercises (WEs)

Students will write two (2) short essays (500 words) and sample answers will be analyzed in class anonymously (i.e., without the instructor revealing who wrote them).

Students must complete ALL WEs in order to satisfy the Writing Requirement for the course.

7.2 Midterm

There will be a in class midterm covering the material in the first half of the course. Questions will be distributed beforehand, but the exam will be closed books.

7.3 Final

There will be a in class final exam covering the material in the second half of the course. Questions will be distributed beforehand, but the exam will be closed books.

7.4 Presentation

The class will be divided into small groups of 2-3 students. Groups will be responsible for preparing a presentation on an assigned topic. The goal is for students to articulate and defend an answer (thesis) to a specific question on an assigned topic.

7.4.1 Basic Writing Assistance

You may find it helpful to use the influential guide by Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, available free online at www.bartleby.com/141/.

Another very useful resource is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, also known as the 'OWL.' It is especially good for getting detailed information on how to cite sources properly. You can find it at owl.english.purdue.edu/.

UF has a dedicate writing program with a 'writing studio' that is intended to provide students with several resources for improving their writing. The site includes several resources, including links to the OWL site just mentioned and other items. You can find that site at writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/.

The writing program provides assistance with writing for UF students, including distance students who are pursuing online-only courses. You can login to tutortrac.clas.ufl.edu/ to make arrangements to meet with a tutor. We must warn you, however, that while those tutors are surely good at helping you avoid certain kinds of problems, many writing tutors are not familiar with writing philosophy papers. What counts as a good paper for, say, an English class might not count as a good paper for philosophy. In philosophy, clear structure and explicit argumentation is at a premium. If you do meet with a tutor,

you would be well advised to share with the tutor the sample argumentative essay so that he or she knows what sort of paper is needed in this class.

7.4.2 Outside Readings

No outside readings are required for the completion of SWAs or WEs. *However*, if you do plan to use an outside reading, you **MUST** check with your instructor or TA whether the particular reading you have in mind is an appropriate source. There are **ONLY TWO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule:

1. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy;
2. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

If you do not follow these instructions on the use of outside readings, you risk seriously harming your grade.

7.5 Group Projects

Unscheduled in-class assignments. Usually 1-2 per week. Pass/fail grade.

7.6 Presentation

The class will be divided into small groups of 2-3 students. Groups will be responsible for preparing a presentation on an assigned topic. The goal is for students to articulate and defend an answer (thesis) to a specific question on an assigned topic.

7.7 Attendance

Starting Wednesday 5/15 (after the drop/add period) attendance will be taken and expected. During lectures, attendance will be taken using the iClicker system. For information on this system, please see: <https://classrooms.at.ufl.edu/classroom-technology/iclicker-response-system/>.

You will use the iClicker Student app, either on a smartphone or a computer. You must register your clicker as soon as possible, but certainly before 5/15.

Everybody has two free, no-questions-asked absences. After that every unjustified absence will cost you 15% of your attendance grade. Five or more unjustified absences (these include the two free ones) will earn you a zero for attendance grade.

Attendance will be expected but not required before and during the add/drop period. This will give everyone time to install and familiarize themselves with the iClicker application.

We will test the iClicker application in the second week of the semester. This will allow you to check your clicker is working properly. At all times during the semester, it is your responsibility to make sure that you have your clicker with you, and that it is working properly.

8 Grade Scale

See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

- <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

	Grade Scale	Grade Value
A	100 - 93	4.00
A-	92 - 90	3.67
B+	89 - 86	3.33
B	85 - 82	3.00
B-	81 - 79	2.67
C+	78 - 75	2.33
C	75 - 72	2.00
C-	71 - 69	1.67
D+	68 - 66	1.33
D	65 - 62	1.00
D-	61 - 60	0.67
E	59 - 0	0.00

9 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 or TAs in this class. 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.

10 Students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drpf>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

11 Online course evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

12 Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to set up a meeting to discuss anything related to the course. Rodrigo will hold office hours on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:30pm – 1:30pm (or by appointment via rodrigo.borges@ufl.edu).

13 Technical Issues

Please, direct any questions about technical issues you might have to UF Helpdesk. The website is <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>. You may also call them at 352 392 4357.

14 Campus Resources

- Health and Wellness:
 1. U 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 (www.umatter.ufl.edu) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
 2. Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website (www.counseling.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
 3. 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 (www.shcc.ufl.edu).
 4. University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website (www.police.ufl.edu) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
 5. 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 (www.ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center).

15 Academic Resources

1. E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

2. Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
3. Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
4. Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
5. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
6. Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage ([here](#)) for more information.
7. On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process (www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/student-complaint-process).

16 Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

1. Writing for This Course

May 12 (Monday) - Introduction and syllabus

2. Arguments

May 13 (Tuesday) - The Validity and Soundness of Arguments

May 14 (Wednesday) - Non-Deductive (i.e., Inductive) Arguments

3. Tools for Thought

May 15 (Thursday) - Doing (Thought) Experiments

May 16 (Friday) - Group Project

May 19 (Monday) - WE 1 is due 11:59 PM

4. Some Philosophical Questions

May 20 (Tuesday) - Our knowledge of the world / - Our knowledge of certainties

May 21 (Wednesday) - Our knowledge of God

May 22 (Thursday) - Our knowledge of morality

May 23 (Friday) - Our (scientific) knowledge of world/Our knowledge of ourselves

May 27 (Tuesday) - WE 2 is due 11:59 PM

5. Our Knowledge of the World Today

May 28 (Wednesday) - Can we refute skepticism?

May 29 (Thursday) - Are we in a simulation?

6. Our Knowledge of Ourselves Today

May 30 (Friday) - Neurophilosophy

June 2 (Monday) - Group Project

7. Our (Scientific) Knowledge of the World Today

June 3 (Tuesday) - Realism

June 4 (Wednesday) - Anti-Realism

8. Our Knowledge of Morality Today

June 5 (Thursday) - Determinism

June 6 (Friday) - Libertarianism

June 9 (Monday) - Group Project

June 10 (Tuesday) - SWA 1 is due 11:59 PM

June 11 (Wednesday) - Relativism
June 12 (Thursday) - Moral realism

9. Our Knowledge of God Today

June 13 (Friday) - Natural theology/Fideism
June 15 (Sunday) - SWA 2 is due 11:59 PM

10. Presentations

June 16 (Monday) - Presentation Prep
June 17 (Tuesday) - Presentation
June 18 (Wednesday) - Presentation
June 20 (Friday) - Presentation

Criteria	Ratings		Pts
Thesis statement and argument The text should clearly state the argument and position of the essay.	30 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	30 pts
Organization and structure The essay should be well-organized and structured, with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. The paragraphs should flow logically and smoothly, with each paragraph contributing to the overall argument.	20 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	20 pts
Clarity and coherence The essay should be written clearly and coherently, with a consistent and appropriate tone. The ideas should be presented in a logical and organized manner, with clear connections between the different parts of the essay.	20 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	20 pts
Use of evidence and examples The essay should include relevant evidence and examples to support the argument. The evidence should be properly cited and analyzed, with clear explanations of how it supports the argument.	10 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	10 pts
Critical thinking and analysis The essay should demonstrate critical thinking and analysis, with thoughtful engagement with the philosophical concepts and ideas being discussed. The essay should go beyond surface-level analysis and show a deeper understanding of the issues at hand.	10 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	10 pts
Grammar, spelling, and punctuation The essay should be free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. The writing should be clear and concise, with proper sentence structure and appropriate word choice.	10 pts Full Marks	0 pts No Marks	10 pts
Total Points: 100			