

Philosophy 2010: Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus

PHI 2010; Section 1907
Spring 2020
MWF 10:40am - 11:30am
Matherly Hall 0115

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: T 12:00pm - 2:00pm, or by appointment
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Course Description and Objectives

This course is a general introduction to philosophical questions, methods, discussion, reading, and writing. It presumes no background in philosophy. We will be surveying various philosophical topics in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science. Some examples of questions we will be addressing are: What evidence is there for or against the existence of God? How can we be sure that there is an external world? Is the mind distinct from the brain? Do we have free will (and if not, what are the consequences for ethics)? What distribution of social goods is demanded by justice? Throughout the course, there will be a heavy emphasis on learning to discuss and write about philosophical issues, so class discussion will be an important component.

Requirements Satisfied by Successful Completion of this Course

Students in this course can earn 4000 words towards the UF Writing Requirement (WR). The Writing Requirement (WR) 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.

PHI 2010 provides 3 credits towards the Philosophy major or minor, and is a General Education – Humanities (H) course as well.

General Education Objectives 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 is required for general education credit.

PHI 2010 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with some key philosophical topics and arguments concerning knowledge, free will, the mind, the nature of morality, and the existence of God. Students will become adept at thinking critically, analyzing arguments, and writing clearly and persuasively.

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 some key philosophical concepts as well as central arguments in the discipline. The COMMUNICATION SLO will be achieved by two papers (roughly 1000 words each), take-home midterm and final exams (roughly 1000 words each), and regular participation in class. Students will be required to explain and evaluate various philosophical views. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the CRITICAL THINKING SLO through the papers and exams, which will be on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. These assignments will be graded on the basis of a student's comprehension of the relevant issues, development and cogent defense of her or his position, clarity of expression, and mechanics.

In short, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain some traditional philosophical positions as well as common objections to these
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive and cogent arguments for particular philosophical positions
- Think critically about difficult and complex topics

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.

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 that can be found 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." 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 2010 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 Text

The textbook for this course is *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 6th Edition*, by John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, published by Oxford University Press. This book is available from the bookstore and on Amazon. The majority of our readings will come from this book.

Course Requirements

Participation: 5%

Reading Quizzes: 15%

Paper 1: 15%

Paper 2: 20%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation

Respectful participation is expected of everyone. It can take a variety of forms: contributing to class discussions, coming to office hours, emailing me with questions, etc. Each class 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.

Reading Quizzes

To prepare for our discussions, we need to study the readings carefully. Try to outline what the author's main claim is, what their principal reasons for that claim are, what alternative position(s) they consider, and the reason(s) why they do not adopt those alternatives. To reward you for doing this work, there will be daily quizzes during the course of the semester. Each quiz will contain two or three true-false, multiple-choice, or short answer questions about the required reading for that day's class. At the end of the semester, I will drop your three lowest reading quiz grades. If you miss a reading quiz, you will not be able to retake it. The drop policy is meant to accommodate unforeseen illnesses, emergencies, and the like. If you will miss a reading quiz for a religious holiday or another official university activity, you must notify me ahead of time; quizzes missed for these reasons will not count toward your three dropped quizzes for the semester.

Papers

You will write two papers for this course. For each paper, you will be given the choice of several prompts, of which you must choose one and write a 4 page paper in response. The prompts will concern topics we have read about and discussed in class. The papers give you the opportunity to illustrate your understanding of the material, as well as to develop your own views. (For a basic overview of how to write a philosophy paper, the following website is worth exploring: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.) Late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. a +/- increment) for each day past the due date.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam is a take-home exam due on Friday, March 13 at 5pm (to be submitted on Canvas). The exam prompts will be provided one week before the due date. You will have to choose a subset of them to answer with a short essay. The questions will concern the readings and topics we have discussed over the first half of the semester. The combined length of your answers should be at least 1000 words. While you may discuss the question prompts with other students, *you may not work with anyone else on the preparation of your answers.*

Final Exam

The Final Exam is a take-home exam, due on Saturday, April 25 at 5pm (to be submitted on Canvas). The exam will be similar in format to the midterm: it will consist of around five questions, and you will have to choose a subset of them to answer with a short essay. The questions will concern the readings and topics we have discussed over the course of the entire semester. The combined length of your answers should be at least 1000 words. While you may discuss the question prompts with other students, *you may not work with anyone else on the preparation of your answers.*

Grading

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>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-87=B+	B+=3.33
86-83=B	B=3.00
82-80=B-	B-=2.67
79-77=C+	C+=2.33
76-73=C	C=2.00
72-70=C-	C-=1.67
69-67=D+	D+=1.33
66-63=D	D=1.00
62-60=D-	D-=0.67

59-0=E	E=0.00
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Course Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Any official changes to the schedule will be announced in class and over email. The syllabus is divided into weeks; the items listed for a given week are to be read before classes that week. Note: "PBF" stands for "Perry, Bratman, and Fischer," i.e. the course text (see above).

Unit 1: Does God Exist?

Week 1: January 6, 8, 10

- Marilyn Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God" (provided on Canvas)

Week 2: January 13, 15, 17

- William Paley, "Natural Theology" (*PBF* pp. 47-51)
- Blaise Pascal, "The Wager" (*PBF* pp. 52-55)
- Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian" (*PBF* pp. 56-59)

Week 3: January 22, 24

- Neil Manson, "The Fine-Tuning Argument" (provided on Canvas)

Unit 2: What Can We Know?

Week 4: January 27, 29, 31

- René Descartes, *Meditations I-VI* (*PBF* pp. 136-160)

Week 5: February 3, 5, 7

- Nick Bostrom, "Are We Living in a Simulation?" (provided on Canvas)
- Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (*PBF* pp. 133-135)

Paper 1 Due by February 7 at 5pm (submit on Canvas)

Week 6: February 10, 12, 14

- G.E. Moore, "Proof of an External World" (provided on Canvas)
- David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge" (provided on Canvas)

Unit 3: The Mind and the Self

Week 7: February 17, 19, 21

- Bertrand Russell, "The Argument from Analogy for Other Minds" (*PBF* pp. 247-249)
- Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes's Myth" (*PBF* pp. 250-257)

Week 8: February 24, 26, 28

- Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism" (*PBF* pp. 277-281)
- Frank Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia" (provided on Canvas)

—Spring Break—

Week 9: March 9, 11, 13

- John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" (*PBF* pp. 298-311)
- Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" (*PBF* pp. 333-343)

Midterm Exam due by March 13 at 5pm (submit on Canvas)

Unit 4: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Week 10: March 16, 18, 20

- Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?" (*PBF* pp. 368-376)
- Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will" (*PBF* pp. 385-396)

Week 11: March 23, 25, 27

- Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (*PBF* pp. 407-413)
- Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" (provided on Canvas)

Unit 5: Ethics

Week 12: March 30; April 1, 3

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (*PBF* pp. 460-476)

Week 13: April 6, 8, 10

- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (*PBF* pp. 504-520)
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (*PBF* pp. 572-585)

Paper 2 Due by April 10 at 5pm (Submit on Canvas)

Week 14: April 13, 15, 17

- Robert Nozick, "Justice and Entitlement" (*PBF* pp. 585-593)
- Susan Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives" (*PBF* pp. 782-793)

Week 15: April 20, 22

- Topics TBD/Makeup Days

Final Exam Due by April 25 at 5pm (Submit on Canvas)