

AI, Philosophy, and Society (IDS29365)
Spring 2025
University of Florida
MW 9:35 - 10:25am (Period 3) [LIT0237](#)

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Course Location: [LIT0237](#)
Course Times: Lecture: MW 9:35 - 10:25am (Period 3)
Friday Discussions:
Period 3 (9:35 AM - 10:25 AM) [TUR2342](#)
Period 4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM) [TUR2350](#)
Period 6 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM) [RNK0106](#)
Office hours: Wednesdays, 11am-1pm, and by appointment
Teaching Assistant (TA): Javier Garcia
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Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 - 3:00 PM, Wednesday 11 AM - 12:30 PM
Office Hours Location: Griffin-Floyd Hall (FLO) 303 (Philosophy Department Library)

Course Description

Over the past few years, artificial intelligence has grown exponentially more powerful—and more influential. In this Quest 1 course, we will explore the following essential question: how AI is changing society, and how should we, as citizens, respond? We will consider two kinds of social changes: changes that contemporary AI is already bringing about, and changes that AI may bring about in the future.

Focusing on the present, we can see that artificial intelligence is already changing how we live in a multitude of ways. Employers use it to evaluate resumes and interview candidates. Hospitals use it to decide how to treat patients, and to allocate scarce resources. Online dating services use it to match users with potential mates. Drivers use it to navigate—and in some cases, to take over the driving. Social media companies use it to decide what content to show users. These developments raise many pressing questions. Should driverless cars prioritize the safety of their drivers over the safety of others, for example? Is it a problem if online dating platforms are more likely to match users with people of the same race? Do we need stronger protections for the human workers who moderate content on online platforms—much of which is extremely disturbing?

Looking further ahead, how will further advancements in AI reshape the world in the decades to come? Will improvements in automation spell the end of work as we know it? Are we

approaching the day when we can build machines that are just as capable and versatile as we are, if not more so? Could we teach such machines to behave morally, as we do with our children? Could we have genuine relationships with machines, and perhaps even fall in love with them? Will we inadvertently “summon the demon” by creating superintelligent systems that destroy society in the pursuit of their own, alien goals?

As we explore these questions together, we will engage with research from several academic disciplines, including computer science, information science, economics, psychology, philosophy, and anthropology. Assignments will focus on original research into existing AI-based technologies as well as critical reflection on how we want AI to shape society going forward.

This course provides both Quest 1 and General Education Humanities credit. As a Quest 1 course, it focuses on multidisciplinary exploration of an essential question about the human condition (how AI is changing society, and how should we, as citizens, respond?) and emphasizes both experiential learning and self-reflection. As a General Education Humanities course, it familiarizes students with analytical tools from several humanities disciplines in order to equip them with the ability to approach this question in a rigorous way and from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Quest and General Education Credit: Quest 1, Humanities

This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

Required Readings and Works

No required materials or fees. All readings and other course materials will be posted to Canvas.

Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

	Description	Points
Perusall	Weekly reading annotations in Perusall	100
Group exercises	Four group activities focused on experiential learning and reflection	300
Short essays	Two In-Class Writing Assignments	300
Capstone project presentation	Group presentation exploring a philosophical question raised by the course	100

Capstone project essay	Short analytical essay exploring the philosophical question selected by the student's group	100
Participation	Participation in lecture and section	100

Perusall

Collaborative annotation of weekly readings on the Perusall online collaborative annotation platform. You will be asked to annotate twelve readings in total. Your grade will be determined by the quantity and quality of your participation in these collaborative discussions over the course of the semester.

Note that while many of the readings for this course are short, they are also very dense—you will need to read them *carefully* and *multiple times* in order to fully absorb the material. I will provide instructions about how to get the most out of the readings in lecture.

Perusall annotations are required and will not be accepted late.

You can skip one Perusall annotation assignment without penalty.

Each subsequent Perusall annotation assignment that you fail to submit will result in a 20% deduction from your Perusall grade.

You are responsible for doing all assigned readings, regardless of whether there is an associated Perusall assignment.

Group exercises

Four small group exercises focused on experimenting with contemporary AI systems or reflecting on the role AI plays (or should play) in our society. The exercises will be completed in section and graded on the basis of a short written report submitted by the group. Each member of the group will normally receive the same grade, based on the overall quality of the report submitted by the group (see the rubric for written assignments below). However, students will be asked to submit peer evaluations following each group assignment summarizing each group member's contributions; students that fail to contribute adequately may be required to re-do the assignment for an individualized grade.

In-Class Writing Assignments

In-Class writings on assigned topics relating to the material read and discussed in class. Each assignment will ask you to develop and defend your own position on a question posed by the readings and/or lectures for the course.

Capstone Project:

Presentation

Students will form small groups and select a philosophical question raised by the course to explore in greater detail. Groups will work together to formulate an answer to their chosen philosophical question, and develop a short presentation articulating and defending that answer. Groups will then deliver their presentations in lecture during the last two weeks of class. Groups will normally receive a single grade for the presentation, except in cases where one or more group members fails to adequately contribute.

Essay

Prior to delivering their group's capstone project presentation, students will submit a 750-word analytical essay articulating and defending an answer to the group's chosen philosophical question. This answer may be, but need not be, the same as the answer defended by the group. Essays should be informed by the group's discussions, but must be written individually rather than in collaboration with other group members. Students will then be asked to revise this paper in the light of the feedback they receive from the class during their group's presentation. The deadline for submitting a revised essay will be the Monday following the presentation. Only the final version of the essay will be graded. However, students must submit a complete draft to receive credit for the assignment.

Participation

10% of your final grade will be determined by the quantity and quality of your in-class participation in the course. You will receive a letter grade for participation representing the overall quality of your participation over the course of the semester. Below is a summary of course standards for different letter grades (borderline cases will receive "+" or "-" grades as appropriate):

A (100%): Outstanding participation. Highly engaged during lecture and section, with active participation in small group discussions and frequent constructive contributions to full-class discussions. In-class contributions reflect excellent understanding of and critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.

B (86%): Good participation. Moderately engaged during lecture and section, with active participation in small group discussions and occasional constructive contributions to full-class discussions. In-class contributions reflect significant understanding of and critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.

C (76%): Minimally adequate participation. Minimally engaged during lecture and section. In-class contributions are infrequent and reflect limited understanding of and critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.

D (66%): Poor participation. Attentive during lecture and section, but participating only very infrequently in small-group and full-class discussions. In-class contributions do not reflect understanding of or critical engagement with the content of lectures and assigned readings.

F (0%): Inadequate participation. Not attentive during lecture and section and/or not participating in either small-group or full-class discussions.

Penalty for Late Submission of Written Work:

The penalty for late work is 1/3 of a letter grade deducted immediately at the deadline, and again at each 24-hour mark beyond the deadline until the work is submitted (including weekend days).

No assignments will be accepted which are more than one week late. Exceptions to this require instructor approval.

Grading Scale	(round up from .5)
A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	0-59

Regular Attendance, Reading, and Note-Taking in Lecture: In order to have the fullest understanding of the material you will need to be present for each class meeting and take notes on the class discussion.

Grading Rubrics

Writing Rubric

(Applies to all written work)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Content	<p>Fully addresses all aspects of the prompt. Demonstrates excellent understanding of and critical engagement with course material. Uses appropriate details and citations from the text(s).</p> <p>(5-6 points)</p>	<p>Fully addresses all aspects of the prompt. Demonstrates good understanding; minor points may be misstated or omitted. Demonstrates good critical engagement with course material. Uses appropriate details and citations from the text(s).</p> <p>(3-4 points)</p>	<p>Significant misunderstandings of course material. Key ideas are explained incorrectly or omitted. Limited critical engagement with course material. Little textual evidence to back up interpretation of the readings.</p> <p>(1-2 points)</p>	<p>Very substantial misunderstandings. Key ideas are explained incorrectly or omitted. Very limited evidence of critical engagement with course material. Textual evidence is missing or not relevant.</p> <p>(0 points)</p>
Writing	<p>Written in simple, non-technical language. Develops a small number of points thoroughly. Well-organized and easy to follow. Few, if any, spelling or grammatical errors.</p> <p>(4 points)</p>	<p>Mostly clear, focused, and organized, but includes some confusing passages, digressions/repetitive passages, or lapses in organization. Some spelling or grammatical errors.</p> <p>(3 points)</p>	<p>Significant lapses in clarity, focus, or organization. Significant spelling or grammatical errors that interfere with understanding.</p> <p>(1-2 points)</p>	<p>Very difficult to understand; many spelling or grammatical errors.</p> <p>(0 points)</p>

Project Presentation Rubric

(Applies to the in-person presentation component of the capstone project)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Content	<p>Fully addresses all aspects of the prompt. Demonstrates excellent understanding of and critical engagement with course material.</p> <p>(5-6 points)</p>	<p>Fully addresses all aspects of the prompt. Demonstrates good understanding of course material with minor errors or omissions. Demonstrates substantial critical engagement with course material.</p> <p>(3-4 points)</p>	<p>Significant misunderstandings of course material. Key ideas are explained incorrectly or omitted. Limited critical engagement with course material.</p> <p>(1-2 points)</p>	<p>Very substantial misunderstandings. Key ideas are explained incorrectly or omitted. Very limited evidence of critical engagement with course material.</p> <p>(0 points)</p>
Presentation	<p>Ideas are presented in simple, non-technical language. Develops a small number of points thoroughly. Well-organized and easy to follow. Polished and engaging. Presentational materials (e.g., slides) are polished and effective.</p> <p>(4 points)</p>	<p>Mostly clear, focused, organized, and polished. Brief segments of the presentation are confusing, repetitive, or off-topic. Uses effective presentational materials.</p> <p>(3 points)</p>	<p>Significant lapses in clarity, focus, or organization. Presentational materials are ineffective or poorly constructed.</p> <p>(1-2 points)</p>	<p>Very difficult to understand. Presentational materials are absent or incomplete.</p> <p>(0 points)</p>

Project Presentation grading scale

10 points	A+ (100%)
9 points	A (96%)
8 points	A- (93%)
7 points	B+ (89%)
6 points	B (86%)
5 points	B- (83%)
4 points	C+ (79%)


3 points	C (76%)
2 points	C- (73%)
1 points	D (66%)
0 points	F (60%)

Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: What is artificial intelligence? · Summary: An introduction to the course and to the current state of AI-based technology. · Required Readings/Works: Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, <i>Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach</i>, chapter 1 (“Artificial Intelligence,” pages 1–35)
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: What is intelligence? · Summary: What is intelligence, and could a computer be intelligent in the same sense that we are intelligent? We will explore this question by considering the famous Turing test, a test for intelligence proposed by father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence Alan Turing. · Required Readings/Works: Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” (pages 433–436, 442–451), Ned Block, “Psychologism and Behaviorism” (pages 5–12) · Assignments: First Perusall assignment (on Turing) due
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Have we already achieved true artificial intelligence? · Summary: In 2020, OpenAI released GPT-3, an AI-based software program capable of chatting about any topic you like, summarizing news articles, writing poetry, playing chess, and solving word puzzles (among other remarkable feats). GPT-3 <i>seems</i> intelligent, but is it <i>really</i> intelligent? We will consider arguments on either side from researchers in philosophy, psychology, and computer science. · Required Readings/Works: Gary Marcus and Ernest Davis, “GPT-3, Bloviator: OpenAI’s Language Generator Has No Idea What It’s Talking About” (<i>MIT Technology Review</i>, 5 pages), David Chalmers, “GPT-3 and General

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<p>Intelligence” (2 pages), Amanda Askell, “GPT-3: Towards Renaissance Models” (4 pages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Assignments: Second Perusall assignment (on Marcus and Davis) due
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Who should bear the costs of AI-based technologies? · Summary: As AI plays an increasingly important role in our lives, we will need to confront difficult questions about how we should distribute its costs and benefits. How should we, as a society, go about answering these questions? We will evaluate a controversial approach from researchers at the MIT Media Lab that attempts to leverage the collective wisdom of internet users. · Required Readings/Works: Karen Hao, “Should a Self-Driving Car Kill the Baby or the Grandma? Depends on Where You’re From” (MIT Technology Review, 5 pages), Edmond Awad et al. (2018), “The Moral Machine Experiment” (pages 59-64), Abby Jaques, “Why the Moral Machine is a Monster” (pages 1–9) · Assignments: Third Perusall assignment (on Jaques) due; first group exercise on GPT-3 due
Weeks 5 and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Introduction to ethical theory and consequentialism · Summary: Ethical theory provides powerful tools to help us think through ethical questions, including ethical questions about AI. Before diving back into AI ethics, we will equip ourselves with some of these tools. We will begin by considering whether moral standards are “culturally relative,” and then discuss two competing views about what we ought to do: consequentialism and nonconsequentialism. · Required Readings/Works: Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword” (pages 160-165), Russ Shafer-Landau, “Consequentialism” (pages 117–132), Robert Nozick, “Moral Constraints and Moral Goals” (pages 83–87) · Assignments: First short paper due week 5; fourth Perusall assignment (on Shafer-Landau) due week 6; second group exercise on the Moral Machine due week 6
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Will we lose control of artificial intelligence? · Summary: The “singularity” is a hypothetical event in which the development of AI that is slightly more intelligent than humans rapidly leads to the development of superintelligent machines that are vastly more intelligent than we are. We will consider why some researchers believe that the singularity is likely, why it might spell disaster for humanity, and how we can prevent such a disaster from occurring.

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Required Readings/Works: <i>Ex Machina</i> (film, to be screened outside of class), David Chalmers, “The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis” (pages 1–15, 22–33) · Assignments: Fifth Perusall assignment (on Chalmers) due
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: If superintelligent AI is an existential threat to humanity, what should we do about it? · Summary: Some ethicists believe that we should be devoting significant resources to reducing the risk that superintelligent AI will one day destroy human civilization—even if that means diverting resources we could otherwise use to help people who are suffering. We will consider a famous argument for this view, as well as responses. · Required Readings/Works: Nick Bostrom, “Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority” (pages 15–28), Amia Srinivasan, “Stop the Robot Apocalypse” (10 pages) · Assignments: Sixth Perusall assignment (on Bostrom) due
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: How will AI change the way we work? · Summary: AI is already creating new jobs and destroying old ones—a trend that some economists predict will end work as we know it. After reflecting on what makes work valuable to us, we will explore these trends and how we should respond to them. · Required Readings/Works: Anca Gheaus and Lisa Herzog, “The Goods of Work (Other Than Money!)” (pages 70–86), Jill Lepore, “Are Robots Coming for Your Job?” (<i>The New Yorker</i>, 14 pages) · Assignments: Seventh Perusall assignment (on Gheaus and Herzog) due; third group exercise on existential risk due
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: What is the human cost of contemporary AI? · Summary: The impressive performance of many contemporary AI-based technologies is driven in part by a largely invisible workforce of poorly compensated and vulnerable humans. We will explore the plight of these “ghost workers” with the help of an anthropologist and computer scientist who study them. · Required Readings/Works: Mary Gray and Siddarth Suri, <i>Ghost Work</i>, chapter 2 (“Humans in the Loop,” pages 1–37)

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Assignments: Second short paper due
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: How is AI affecting our romantic relationships? · Summary: Information scientists have uncovered evidence that the matching algorithms on dating sites can exacerbate racial biases in our interpersonal relationships. We will consider what dating sites can do about it—and whether they ought to. · Required Readings/Works: Thomas McMullan, “Are the Algorithms that Power Dating Apps Racially Biased?” (<i>Wired</i>, 6 pages), Jevan Hutson et al. (2018), “Debiasing Desire: Addressing Bias and Discrimination on Intimate Platforms” (pages 1–15), Srinivasan, “Does Anyone Have the Right to Sex?” (<i>London Review of Books</i>, 15 pages) · Assignments: Eighth Perusall assignment (on Srinivasan) due; fourth group exercise on AI and the value of work due
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: How will AI affect our romantic relationships in the future? · Summary: So-called “digisexuals” claim to be exclusively attracted to robots. We will begin by exploring the social implications of the emerging market in “sex robots,” and in particular whether their use encourages the objectification of women. We will then consider whether mutual romantic love with robots will one day be possible. · Required Readings/Works: Alex Williams, “Do You Take This Robot?” (<i>The New York Times</i>, 8 pages), Rae Langton, “Pornography, Speech, and Silence”
<p>Links to an external site.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">(video, 33 minutes), Lily Frank and Sven Nyholm, “From Sex Robots to Love Robots: Is Mutual Love with a Robot Possible?” (pages 219–238)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Assignments: Ninth Perusall assignment (on Frank and Nyholm) due 	
Weeks 13 and 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Can we build morality into machines?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Summary: As AI-based systems become ever more powerful and influential, some researchers argue that we should be trying to equip them with the ability to reason through ethical dilemmas for themselves. But what sort of moral code should machines follow, and how can we program them to follow it? Anderson and Anderson argue that machines should be designed to follow the same moral standards as human beings, and consider how this might be achieved. Grant disagrees. · Required Readings/Works: Isaac Asimov, “Runaround” (16 pages), Isaac Asimov, “The Three Laws” (page 18), Susan Anderson and Michael Anderson, “Machine Ethics: Creating an Ethical Intelligent Agent” (pages 15–25), David Grant, “Ethics for Artificial Agents” (13 pages) · Assignments: Fifth group exercise on AI and romance due week 13
Weeks 15 and 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Topic: Capstone project presentations · Summary: Students will present their capstone projects and receive feedback from their classmates. · Required Readings/Works: No new readings · Assignments: Capstone project presentations due week 15; written project reflections due week 16

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) learning outcomes as follows:

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

Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities and sciences can help us understand artificial intelligence's present and future effects on society (Content SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises, Short Papers, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

Identify, describe, and explain how the resources available in the humanities and sciences can help us reflect on how we *should* want artificial intelligence to affect society (Content SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises, Short Papers, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

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

Identify, analyze, and evaluate themes in public and scholarly discussions of artificial intelligence and its effects on society (Critical Thinking SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises, Short Papers, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

Analyze and evaluate the particular questions about artificial intelligence and its effects on society that we discuss in the course, such as questions about how artificial intelligence will affect our work and romantic lives (Critical Thinking SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises, Short Papers, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

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 essential questions about how artificial intelligence is, will, and should affect society in oral and written forms appropriate to the relevant humanities disciplines incorporated into the course (Communication SLOs for Gen Ed Humanities and Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises, Short Papers, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

Reflect on how artificial intelligence is affecting us and our communities (Connection SLO for Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises 2, 4, and 5, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

Reflect on what we value, and how those values should shape the way we interact with AI-based technologies and the way we respond to AI's social effects (Connection SLO for Q1). Assessed by Group Exercises 2, 4, and 5, Capstone Project, Participation, and Perusall.

Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

Experiential learning is an important part of this course and will be incorporated into several assignments:

In the first group exercise, you will experiment with the most current version of an AI text chatbot. Your goal will be to interview the chatbot in order to assess whether it is intelligent.

In the second group exercise, you will participate in the Moral Machine experiment, in which participants consider how a driverless car should behave in various accident scenarios. Your goal will be to try to formulate ethical principles that should govern the behavior of driverless cars based on your experiences with the experiment.

In the fourth group exercise, you will investigate the effects that online dating services are having on our relationships by informally (and anonymously) interviewing friends, classmates, or family members about their experiences.

In the two In-Class Writing Assignments and the Capstone Project, you will conduct original philosophical research by developing and defending your own position on a question posed by the readings and/or lectures for the course.

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Throughout the course, you will have the opportunity to reflect on how AI-based technologies have affected your own life and the lives of those around you, whether you believe those effects are good or bad (and why), and how we should address the social changes that AI is already bringing about and may bring about in the future. Time for self-reflection will be integrated into nearly every lecture, and will also be incorporated into the following assignments:

In the second group exercise, you will reflect on how the burdens and benefits of AI-based technology should be distributed.

In the third group exercise, you will reflect on what makes work valuable to us.

In the fourth group exercise, you will reflect on how AI should and should not affect our romantic relationships.

Campus Resources for UF Students

An extensive list of campus resources- technical, academic, medical, and mental- can be found [here](#) and on the "Campus Resources" page

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism ([Links to an external site.](#))

Most instances of academic dishonesty can be avoided by thoroughly citing the resources you have used to help you understand the topic on which you're writing. If you have read something that helped you understand the material, cite it! Failure to cite sources is the most common (and easily avoidable) academic offense.

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://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) ([Links to an external site.](#))

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.

Evaluations

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/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

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/> ([Links to an external site.](#)) [Links to an external site.](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> ([Links to an external site.](#))

[Links to an external site.](#)

Attendance, Illness, Religious Holidays, and Twelve Day Rule

In order to have the fullest understanding of the material you will need to be present for each class meeting and take notes on the class discussion. Given that we are all subject to the whims

of our internet connection, there will be no penalty for missing a class, but to get the most out of this course you will want to be part of each of our class meetings.

Official 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> (Links to an external site.)

E-mail guidelines:

(1) If you need some practical information about the course you should look at most recently updated syllabus or on the website. E-mails requesting information which is available on the most recently updated syllabus or on the website will not be answered.

(2) If you want to discuss a substantive philosophical question you should bring it up in your discussion section or visit your Discussion Leader's office hours. E-mails asking substantive philosophical questions will cannot be answered in full- philosophy just doesn't work that way! (You will likely receive a note suggesting that you visit one of our office hours or arrange an appointment to chat.)

If, after reading (1) & (2) you still think you should e-mail me, you are welcome to do so at through Canvas Inbox. I will try to answer e-mail within a week.

Please note: I may not read email between 5pm and 9am.

How to do well in this course:

Be sure to read the assigned material before our class meeting. This will help to ensure that our class time is quality time.

After class, re-read the material for the session, paying special attention to the questions that you had before. Hopefully the material will make much more sense to you now.

Bring specific questions with you to class. Even if there are aspects of the readings or study questions you didn't fully grasp, the fact that you tried should help you to narrow down what it is that you don't get.

See us in office hours, if there are still questions you are unclear about. That's what office hours are for. Don't be shy.

Manage your time well. The due date is not the DO date! Many students make the mistake of waiting until a few days before papers are due to start writing. That is *bad* time management. The same number of hours devoted to the material BEFORE class can lead to a much more efficient use of your time, better understanding, and higher grades.

Discussion Sections- How to make the most of them

Your discussion sections are where you get a chance to go over some of the main points of the course in more detail. They are also the place where you get a chance to talk philosophy, to develop arguments of your own. Finally, they are the place where you will receive instruction about how to write philosophy, including specific training to do your written assignments. Discussion sections are entirely for your benefit, and engaging in these discussions will improve your performance on your written work as well as your understanding of the material. In grading your work, we will hold you to a standard that assumes your attendance in (lecture and) discussion.

Quality participation in discussion depends upon being prepared and making a substantial effort to engage with the material in class. Students who attend discussion section and make useful contributions to the class discussion will see a bump in their Discussion Post grade at the end of the term. Those who attend but are not prepared and participating will still improve their performance on their coursework by attending discussions, but merely being present in section will not boost your Discussion Post grade.

On Reading Philosophy Texts:

You will be expected to have done the assigned reading before you come to class to be able to follow the lecture and participate in tutorial discussion. Learning philosophy is as much learning a style of thinking and reasoning as it is learning certain contents. Therefore it is important that you try to participate actively and learn to engage with the readings critically.

You should budget enough time for the reading to be able to read each piece at least three times. Don't expect to be able to 'breeze through' the texts and you can avoid a lot of frustration. For all the readings you should have a pen and paper ready to take notes as you read. Philosophical writing is concerned with advancing and defending arguments. Your task will be to try to reconstruct the arguments and to critically evaluate them.

The first reading of the text should be fairly quick. Your goal here should be to get a first, rough sense of the general argument the author is advancing and the rough structure of the text. What is his or her main thesis? (write this down!) Where in the text is s/he arguing for it? Where does s/he address objections? Where does he discuss qualifications? Where does s/he motivate the argument? Don't worry, if during the first reading you don't yet understand how precisely the author is arguing for a thesis.

The second reading should be devoted to giving a reconstruction of the argument that is as sympathetic as possible. Now you should spend a lot of time on trying to understand how the author supports the main thesis, and how s/he might address potential objections. Here it is usually useful to try to jot down the following: What are the premises of the argument? How are the premises themselves supported? For example the author might appeal to shared intuitions or might claim that the premises are self-evident. What are the steps which are meant to get the

author from the premises to the conclusion? (Here words like ‘because’ and ‘therefore’ can provide a clue.) You might think of yourself as engaging in a dialogue with the text here. Ask critical questions of the text, such as “You say that all simple ideas are copies of impressions. Why should I be compelled to accept this?” Then search the text for answers. At this stage your aim should not yet be to try to discover flaws or problems in the argument. Aim to make the argument as strong as possible.

Finally it is time to be critical. During a third reading you ought to try to see if you can uncover weaknesses in the arguments. If someone would want to disagree with a conclusion, there are two general ways in which one might attack the author’s arguments. One, you can disagree with one or more of the premises. That is you might accept that *if* we grant the premises, *then* the conclusion follows, but you might disagree with one or more of the premises. (But then you should ask yourself how you would respond to the attempt to motivate the premises.) Or, two, you might disagree with one or more of the steps in the argument. That is, you might be willing to accept the premises, but you might deny that this commits you to the conclusion as well. If you have an objection of the latter kind you should try to explain why it is possible to accept the author’s premises and yet deny his or her conclusions. (Of course you also might have objections of both kinds.)

A careful reading of a difficult text takes time. Learn to read patiently and slowly, and before you get frustrated, remember that even professional philosophers struggle with some of the texts you are reading. One of the most wonderful aspects of reading philosophy is that it allows you to engage in conversations with some of the deepest and most original thinkers. Enjoy the challenge!