

PHI 2010: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2024 SYLLABUS

Instructor Information:

James Simpson, Ph.D. Email: simpson.james@ufl.edu

Office Hours:

Office Hours: Time: M, 8:30am-10:30am, OBA. Location: Griffin-Floyd Hall Rm 331.

Course Time and Location:

Meeting Time: MWF, 12:50pm-1:40pm. (Period 6) Location: MAT 0113.

General Education and Writing Requirement

PHI 2010 is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program, a General Education Core Course in Humanities, and a UF Writing Requirement 4000 Course. 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.

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/program-area-objectives.aspx>

PHI 2010 accomplishes its 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 four papers (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, exams, and discussions in class, all of which will be focused on topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. Papers 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 and arguments, as well as common objections to them
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive and cogent arguments for particular philosophical positions
- Think critically and carefully about difficult and complex topic.

Humanities Gen Ed SLOs:

	Content	Critical Thinking	Communication
Humanities	Identify, describe, and explain the history, underlying theory and methodologies used.	Identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape thought within the subject area. Approach issues and problems within the discipline from multiple perspectives.	Communicate knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.

State 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.

State Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s):

- Students will develop critical thinking skills.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of classical western philosophical views.
- Students will analyze, explain, and evaluate foundational concepts of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

Course Goals

This course is designed to introduce students to the practice of philosophy through the study of central philosophical questions and arguments, as represented by a selection of historical and/or contemporary readings. Students will learn some of the basic principles of good reasoning, including how to understand arguments, represent them clearly and fairly, and evaluate them for cogency. Students will also learn to develop their own arguments and views regarding the philosophical questions studied in the course in a compelling fashion. In these ways the course aims to develop students’ own reasoning and communication skills in ways that will be useful in any further study of philosophy they undertake and beyond the bounds of philosophy itself.

Course Objectives

Students will demonstrate their competencies in understanding and assessing the philosophical theories studied in the course via a set of assigned papers and exams, in which they will be assessed for their abilities to: (i) understand and apply basic concepts of good reasoning, including validity and soundness, (ii) accurately and fairly describe and explain the philosophical views represented in works assigned for the course, (iii) formulate arguments of their own while anticipating possible lines of objections and responding in a conscientious fashion, and (iv) speak and write clearly,

persuasively, and in an informed and conceptually sophisticated manner the philosophical issues discussed in the course.

Course Description:

Content. This course introduces students to philosophy by engaging with various readings and arguments, both classical and contemporary, in the history of philosophy. This course will have a two-part structure. The first part of the course will cover some topics in the philosophy of religion, epistemology, philosophy of mind, meta-ethics, and the three standard normative ethical theories, which are utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, and Aristotelian virtue theory. The second part of the course will cover applied philosophical issues in both ethics and epistemology, including abortion, meat-eating, conspiracy theories, the use of autonomous weapons in war, among others.

Method. This course also has significant goals in building skills of philosophical thinking, speaking, and writing.

Note well, this course fulfills the Gordon Rule 4,000 Writing Requirement and the Humanities Requirement for General Education. The Writing Requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. While helping students meet the broad learning outcomes of content, communication, and critical thinking, I'll evaluate and provide feedback on students' written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. 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. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Required Materials:

Available in the UF Bookstore: Gideon Rosen et al., *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* 2nd Edition ISBN: 9780393624427

New: 84.25, Used: 63.25, Rental New: 63.19, Rental Used: 33.70

Note: Some required readings will also be made available on our course Canvas site, under "Files."

Recommended:

On writing well generally: Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition. (Pearson, 1999).

On writing a philosophy paper: Pryor, Jim. "A Brief Guide to Writing a Philosophy Paper" (2008).

Assessment:

Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

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

(1) To do well in this course you must be prepared to engage the assigned material. This includes keeping current on the reading assignments and being aware of the course schedule and activities as discussed in lecture and posted on the course website. You are responsible for regularly checking your UF email and the Canvas site.

(2) Most people who do well on writing assignments for this course begin writing well in advance of deadlines. You should plan to meet with me to discuss your plans for your papers, and you should expect to write and revise drafts of your essays. However, note two things. First, **I do not read drafts**. I am happy to discuss your paper, help you work through your argument, etc., but I will not be reading drafts. Second, let me disabuse you of a common misconception: **visiting me during office hours doesn't result in an automatic A for any assignment or for the course**. That said, please come to see me during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions or to talk with me about your papers or the course, and feel free to email me with any questions you may have about the content of the course or some administrative aspect of it.

(3) Writing assignments will be on assigned topics.

(4) In grading your work, I will hold you to a standard that assumes you have been doing the readings and coming to class.

(5) In grading your work, I'll be using a grading rubric. The rubric is available both at the end of this syllabus and on our Canvas site under "Files".

(6) Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher for the course and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. These essays will be evaluated according to the criteria set out in the writing assessment rubric posted on Canvas under "Files".

Points:

1. Attendance: 5 points.
2. 2: 15-Q Canvas Multiple Choice and True/False Exams (10 points each): 20 points.
3. 1: 250-word writing assignment on arguments: 5 points
4. 1: 750-word personal reflection: 5 points.
5. 1: 1000-word exploratory essay: 15 points.
6. 2: 1,000-word take-home argumentative essay exams (worth 25 points each): 50 points.
 - o Total: 100 points.

Points for all written materials will be posted on Canvas as soon as they are graded.

Late work will be accepted but penalized unless legitimate documentation is provided to me within the appropriate amount of time (see below). For more information about late penalties, contact me via email or visit me during office hours.

- Excused absence(s) require documentation be provided to me within a week of the absence(s).

Papers are submitted by uploading a pdf or doc on Canvas.

Critical Due Dates:

Exam 1: 10/19

Exam 2: 12/6

Arguments Assignment: 8/31

Personal Reflection: 10/7

Exploratory Essay: 11/8

Argumentative Essay 1: 10/16

Argumentative Essay 2: 12/13

Attendance:

You must attend at least 80% of the classes to get full credit for attendance.

Writing Assignment on Arguments:

For this assignment, you will need to develop some kind of deductive argument. What the deductive argument is, is up to you. It can be valid or not; sound or not. But you will need to explain why it is valid (or not) and sound (or not).

Exploratory Essay:

This will be an opportunity for students to write on some philosophical topic that interests them, but that's not directly discussed in class. The goal will be to explore some area of interest in philosophy and defend a view in that area engagingly and persuasively.

Exams:

There will be two exams in this class. The first exam will be on the material covered in the first part of the course. The second exam will be on material covered in the last three parts of the course. Both exams will be multiple choice, true/false exams. Before each exam, a detailed study guide will be provided by me.

Personal Reflection:

The personal reflection will be a 1000-word paper answering one of the following two questions:

Question 1: What is the most serious ethical problem/issue/dilemma that you face or have faced as a college student? How did you resolve or deal with this problem?

Question 2: What do you think is the most serious ethical problem/issue/dilemma that college students face? How do you think students should resolve or deal with this problem?

Argumentative Essays:

There will be two 1000-word argumentative essays. These will be on assigned topics. They will test your understanding of the material and your skill at writing philosophical essays in the analytical style.

Grading Scale is as follows:

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Classroom Conduct:

Do not be disruptive or disrespectful. All conversations should be civil and on-topic.

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.

Plagiarism will result, at the very least, in failure of the course, if not suspension or expulsion from the University. So, don’t do it.

Students with Disabilities, Student Counseling Services:

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

ChatGPT/AI

Use of AIs such as ChatGPT to compose all or part of the assignments for this course is strictly prohibited. Please be aware that Canvas has TurnItIn software that automatically checks for signs that an AI was used to write your submissions. Beyond there, there are certain telltale signs of AI-generated responses for which the instructor will be on the lookout. Any assignment found to be

generated by AI will automatically receive a zero, and the student will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

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/>.

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. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

Writing Studio:

Students will also find a number of resources for improving their writing at the university's Writing Studio page: www.writing.ufl.edu

In-Class Recording:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Code of Conduct.

Tentative Schedule (could change depending on the pace of the course):

Part 1: Arguments/Philosophy of Religion/Epistemology/Personal Identity/Free Will & Moral Responsibility/Meta-Ethics & Normative Ethics

8/23: Review Syllabus. Discuss arguments.

8/26: Continue on arguments. Reading: TBA

8/28: Readings for this day: Anselm's Ontological Argument (OA), pages (pp) 8-9 of the Norton. Andrew Chapman "The Ontological Argument for God's Existence".

8/30: Excerpts from Alvin Plantinga 1974 on the so-called modal ontological argument.

8/31: Argument Assignment due.

9/2: Holiday

9/4: Aquinas' Contingency Argument, pp. 13-15, and a more recent version.

9/6: Roger White on the Fine-Tuning Argument, pp. 29-36.

9/9: Problem of Evil. Louise Antony and Elenore Stump, pp. 41-57 of the Norton.

9/11: Cont'd.

9/13: Discussion of other arguments for the existence of god.

9/16: Edmund Gettier, pp. 143-45 of the Norton. Andrew Chapman "The Gettier Problem and the Definition of Knowledge".

9/18: Cont'd. Michael Clark 1963.

9/20: Knowledge First. Reading: Timothy Williamson, pp. 149-155 of the Norton.

9/23: Cartesian Skepticism. Excerpts from Descartes' *Meditations*. Andrew Chapman "External World Skepticism". G.E. Moore, pp. 278-283.

9/25: Reading: Jonathan Vogel, pp. 284-291 of the Norton.

9/27: Pyrrhonian Skepticism. Reading: TBA

9/30: Cont'd.

10/2: Problem of Induction. Reading: Kenneth Blake Vernon "The Problem of Induction". David Hume, pp. 166-174.

10/4: Cont'd. Reading: TBA

10/7: Personal Reflection due. Personal Identity. Reading: Chad Vance, "Personal Identity".

10/9: Cont'd. Reading: TBA

10/11: Free Will & Moral Responsibility. Reading: Jonah Nagashima's "Free Will and Free Choice". Reading: Galen Strawson, pp. 600-09 of the Norton.

10/14: Compatibilism and Libertarianism. Reading: A.J. Ayer, pp. 618-24 of the Norton.

10/16: Reading: Chelsea Haramia “Free Will and Moral Responsibility”; Rebecca Renninger “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”. Argumentative Essay 1 due.

10/18: Holiday.

10/19: Exam 1.

10/21: Meta-Ethics. Reading: Thomas Metcalf “Ethical Realism”; Mackie, pp. 850-57 of the Norton.

10/23: Cont’d. Reading: TBA

10/25: Utilitarianism. Reading: J.S. Mill, pp. 790-798 of the Norton. Shane Gronholz “Consequentialism”.

10/28: Deontology. Reading: Kant, pp. 800-10 of the Norton; Andrew Chapman “Deontology: Kantian Ethics”.

10/30: Deontology and Utilitarianism cont. No Reading.

11/1: Virtue Ethics. Reading: Aristotle, pp. 813-822 of the Norton; Rosalind Hursthouse, pp. 824-30 of the Norton.

11/4: Social Contract Theory. Reading: TBA

Part 2: Applied Issues

11/6: Famine. Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” 678-84; Onora O’Neill, “The Moral Perplexities of Famine and World Hunger,” 685-95.

11/8: Exploratory Essay due. Abortion. Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A defense of abortion,” 696-704.

11/11: Holiday

11/13: Don Marquis, “Why abortion is immoral”, 706-712

11/15: Elizabeth Harman, “The moral significance of animal pain,” 714-721; Diamond, Eating Meat and Eating People, 723-729.

11/18: Alistair Norcross ‘Puppies, Pigs and People’ 2004.

11/20: Ethics of Autonomous Weapons. Robert Sparrow “Killer Robots”

11/22: Conspiracy theories. Reading: Coady 'Conspiracy theory as heresy', Millson 'Conspiracy theories'.

12/2: Sport and Performance Enhancing Drugs, Reading: Darrin Belousek, "Professional Baseball and performance-enhancing drugs"; Heather Dyke "Why is doping wrong anyway?".

12/4: The Attention Economy. Castro and Pham “Is the attention economy noxious?”

12/6: Exam 2.

12/13: Argumentative Essay 2.

ADDENDUM: WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC					
	A	B	C	D	E
RESPONSE TO PAPER TOPIC, FOCUSED USE OF TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIAL	• Overall, the paper does an excellent job of responding to the topic question and reflects a more than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	• Overall, the paper responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	• Overall, the paper provides a merely sufficient response to the topic question and reflects a less than competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class.	• Overall, the paper only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class.	• Overall, the paper does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class.
INTRO & THESIS	• The introduction & thesis do an excellent job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. The thesis makes a significant and debatable claim.	• The introduction & thesis do a good enough job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. The thesis is clear and fairly interesting.	• The introduction & thesis do not adequately identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. The thesis is somewhat unclear, fairly obvious, or a bit misguided.	• The introduction & thesis do not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. The thesis is confused, obvious, or obviously wrong.	• The introduction & thesis do not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. The thesis is missing or incoherent.
PARAGRAPH	• Paragraphs are excellently written. Paragraphs make a point, with clear topic sentences to govern them, contain no irrelevant sentences or gaps, and each paragraph advances the thesis one step further.	• Paragraphs do a good enough job of making a point, and have clear enough topic sentences to govern them. They contain no irrelevant sentences or gaps, and each paragraph for the most part advances the thesis one step further.	• Only some of the paragraphs do their job well enough. Topic sentences are partly clear or only partially govern; point of the paragraphs is only somewhat intact; the paragraphs don't explicitly relate to the thesis or to nearby paragraphs.	• An unsatisfactory use of paragraphs. Topic sentences are missing or unclear. Paragraphs have multiple or underdeveloped ideas. Paragraphs are islands and have no relation to thesis or nearby paragraphs.	• It is unclear how the paragraphs are individual units of meaning toward an overall end.
STRUCTURE OF ARGUMENT	• The argumentative line of the paper is fully intact—all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material and no gaps in argument. The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow.	• The argumentative line of the paper is almost intact—almost all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material and very few gaps in argument. The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow.	• The argumentative line of the paper is generally intact—content of the paper generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material and perhaps some gaps in argument. The argument is difficult to follow in places.	• The argumentative line is not intact—the content of the paper tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material and/or major gaps in the argument. The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete.	• The argumentative line is either missing or incoherent—how the content of the paper is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, there is far too much irrelevant material, and there is a failure to link pieces of the idea to one another. The argument is very difficult to follow.
STRENGTH OF ARGUMENT	• The main ideas of the paper are clear and convincing.	• The main ideas of the paper are for the most part clear and convincing.	• The main ideas of the paper are only partially clear and convincing.	• The main ideas of the paper are only marginally clear and convincing.	• It is unclear what the paper's main ideas are supposed to be.
USE OF EVIDENCE	• The paper's claims are all well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	• The paper's claims are generally well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	• Only some of the paper's claims are well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.	• None of the interpretations on which the paper's claims are based are cogent.	• None of the paper's claims are based on interpretations of the relevant textual evidence.

NOTE: Criteria are adjusted to the assignment. For example, the thesis of an analytic exposition is a clear statement of the philosopher's main argumentative claim and its stakes, while the thesis of a full argumentative essay is an original claim taking a position on a philosopher's argumentative claim and its stakes; the argumentative line of an analytic exposition does not include objections and replies, while the argumentative line of a full essay does. And so on.