

PHI 2010: Introduction to Philosophy (sect. 2023)

Class Meeting Times and Location:

- Tuesday, Period 8-9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM), MAT0114
- Thursday, Periods 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM), MAT0114

Instructor Information

Instructor: Bob Beddor

Email: r.beddor@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday noon-1pm; Thursday 2:30pm-3:30pm, and also by appointment.

Office Location: Office 308, Philosophy Department, Griffin-Floyd Hall

Office Phone: (352) 392-2084 (Philosophy Department)

Note: the best way to contact me outside of class and office hours is by email

Overview

This course will introduce students to some of the major questions in philosophy. Topics include:

- Can we use philosophical arguments to prove or disprove the existence of God?
- How can we know anything about the world around us? Can we rule out the possibility that we are currently dreaming, or that we are caught in a computer simulation (as in *The Matrix*)?
- We often take for granted that we have free will. But what is free will, exactly? Is it compatible with the idea that all our actions are determined by physical processes?
- Will you be the same person in twenty years' time? Is it possible for you to survive memory loss or death?
- What are our ethical obligations to other people and the world around us?
- What is the meaning of life? (And what does this question even mean?)

While we will be reading many major philosophers' attempts to tackle these questions, throughout this course the emphasis will be on *you*: the goal is for each of you to wrestle with these questions and develop what you take to be the most cogent, well-supported answers.

General Education and Writing Requirement

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program and a UF Writing Requirement (WR4) course. A minimum grade of C is required for credit toward the Philosophy major or minor and for general education credit.

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 primarily via a set of assigned papers, in which they will be assessed for their abilities to: (i) understand and apply basic concepts of good reasoning, (ii) accurately and fairly describe and explain 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 and persuasively about abstract and challenging matters of the sort raised by the philosophical material in the course.

Required Text

The textbook for this course is *Philosophy: Asking Questions – Seeking Answers*, by Stich & Donaldson. This textbook is available on Amazon and will also be available in the Campus bookstore. Other texts will be posted on Canvas.

Evaluation and Expectations

- Weekly Online questions: 10%
- Participation: 20%
- First Short Response Paper: 15%
- Second Paper: 25%
- Final Paper: 30%

Here is a more detailed description of these components:

Weekly Online Questions (10%)

Every week there will be an online multiple-choice question on Canvas, which students should complete by 4pm on Thursday (before the Thursday class meeting). These questions are designed to check your comprehension of the readings/material to be covered that week.

Attendance/Participation (20%)

Participation – asking questions, raising objections - is an essential part of doing philosophy. The attendance/participation grade will be determined as follows:

- Attendance (10%)
- Participation (5%) The participation grade is based on your in-class participation over the course of the semester. In general, a good goal is to aim to try to ask (or answer) at least one question per class (it is fine if you ask more than one, and it is also fine if some weeks you do

not ask any). I realize that some students are shy about speaking up in class, but I hope to create a constructive and supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their questions and comments.

- Discussion Group Responses (5%): In order to foster participation and collaboration, I will be assigning students into discussion groups. Each week, usually on Thursday, I will provide a couple of open-ended questions designed to prompt reflection on the readings. You will then have 15-20 minutes of class time set aside to discuss these questions. Each week your group should send me a short document summarizing some of the ideas that your group came up with (a google doc is a convenient way to do this). This does not need to be long or polished (bullet points are fine); this is mostly a matter of allowing me to see how you are thinking about the material we are covering.

First Short Response Paper (15%)

Your first paper should briefly summarize one of the arguments from the readings, and then raise a potential objection. (500 words)

Second Paper (25%)

Your second paper is an opportunity to develop your thoughts in response to one of the arguments in the readings. You should briefly summarize the argument, and then engage with it critically, by either offering an original criticism of it, or extending the argument in some way. (1000 words)

Final Paper (30%)

Your final paper is an opportunity to develop a more sustained original response to one of the readings. As with the second paper, you should summarize some argument from the readings, then engage with it critically, by either offering an original criticism of it, or extending the argument in some way. (1300 words)

Note: there is no final exam for this class.

If you have any questions at all about the assignments, please visit me in office hours or send me an email message! (The best way to contact me outside of class or office hours is via email.)

More detailed instructions for the papers will be provided closer to the assignment deadlines. A grading rubric for papers can be found below.

GRADING RUBRIC FOR PAPERS

A	B	C	D	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • The introduction does an excellent job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are clear and convincing • All the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are all well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument advances in a manner that is easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper responds well to the topic question and reflects a competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class. • The introduction does a good enough job of identifying the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are for the most part clear and convincing. • Almost all the content of the paper supports its main ideas with no irrelevant material. • The paper's claims are generally well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument advances in a manner that is for the most part easy to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • The introduction does not adequately identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are only partially clear and convincing. • The content of the paper generally supports its main ideas, though there is some irrelevant material. • Only some of the paper's claims are well-grounded in cogent interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument is difficult to follow in places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper only partially responds to the topic and reflects an incompetent command of the relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • The main ideas of the paper are only marginally clear and convincing. • The content of the paper tends not to support its main ideas, and there is a good deal of irrelevant material. • None of the interpretations on which the paper's claims are based are cogent. • The argument is difficult to follow or incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, the paper does not respond to the topic and fails to draw upon relevant texts and materials discussed in class. • The introduction does not identify the issues raised by the topic to be discussed in the rest of the paper. • It is unclear what the paper's main ideas are supposed to be. • How the content of the paper is supposed to support its main ideas is unclear, and there is far too much irrelevant material. • None of the paper's claims are based on interpretations of the relevant textual evidence. • The argument is very difficult to follow.
<p>Grammar: The document <i>Basic Grammar for Writing Assignments</i> posted under the "Resources" tab discusses some common grammatical errors you must avoid. Grammatical errors will incur deductions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improper formation of plurals and possessives (- 2 points) • Failure of agreement between subject and verb (- 2 points) • Run-on sentence (<i>Basic Grammar §2</i>) (- 4 points) • Unclear Pronoun Reference (<i>Basic Grammar §4</i>) (- 2 points) • Confusion of <i>it's</i> and <i>its</i> (- 2 points) • Sentence fragment (<i>Basic Grammar §1</i>) (- 4 points) • Faulty Modification (<i>Basic Grammar §3</i>) (- 2 points) • Faulty Parallelism (<i>Basic Grammar §5</i>) (- 2 points) 				

Official Style Guide

Philosophy writing is somewhat different from writing you may do in other classes. In philosophy papers, you primarily want to be arguing for some claim (your thesis). For this class, a helpful resource is Jim Pryor's philosophy paper style guidelines: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

Grade Scale

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/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-86=B+	B+=3.33
85-82=B	B=3.00
81-79=B-	B-=2.67
78-75=C+	C+=2.33
75-72=C	C=2.00
71-69=C-	C-=1.67
68-66=D+	D+=1.33

65-62=D	D=1.00
61-60=D-	D-=0.67
59-0=E	E=0.00

Classroom Expectations

Discussion Expectations

We want to create an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect in our classroom. This course emphasizes discussion and debate: I firmly believe that the best way to learn philosophy is to practice doing philosophy, which involves formulating hypotheses, raising questions, and considering objections.

In the course of our discussions, disagreements will naturally arise. That is fine; disagreement is an integral part of philosophical activity. That said, it is important to pay attention to the way you voice your disagreement with others; we want to ensure everyone feels respected even in the midst of disagreement. Here are some general guidelines to achieve this goal:

- Please try to listen to your classmates, and avoid interrupting them.
- When you disagree, please take care to challenge the idea being discussed, rather than the person.
- When you disagree with a position, try to articulate your grounds for disagreement (backing up your position with reasons is an integral part of doing philosophy).

Other Classroom Expectations

Please also avoid using cell phones or computers during class. If you are convinced that you learn best while using a computer, please talk to me – I may be willing to make an exception. However, studies suggest that most students are less productive when they bring their computers to class.

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 73% (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 four papers (1000-1250 words each) and regular participation in discussion sections. 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 discussions, both 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

Writing Requirement Credit

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 73% (C) or higher overall and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. Satisfactory completion of the writing component requires submission of all four papers and a grade of 77% (C+) or better on three out of four of them. A few things to note about the WR are the following:

- Written assignments that count toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments should include such elements as well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure, well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.
- Writing will be evaluated based on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. I will provide a detailed rubric that shows how we will evaluate assignments using these criteria (see the end of this syllabus).
- In-class writing assignments (including any done in discussion sections), class notes, and essay examinations may not be counted toward the 4,000 words.

- You may find it helpful to reach out to the UF Writing Studio for writing help: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

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 Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Canvas e-Learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." 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.

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 who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

COVID recommendations

In response to COVID-19, the following recommendations are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.uf for screening/testing and vaccination opportunities.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

General Attendance 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>.

Class Recording Policy

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 Conduct Code.

Health and Wellness Resources

- [*U Matter, We Care*](#): If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit the U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress
- [*Counseling and Wellness Center*](#): Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- [*Student Health Care Center*](#): Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.
- [*University Police Department*](#): Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- [*UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*](#): For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

- [*GatorWell Health Promotion Services*](#): For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [*Career Connections Center*](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [*Library Support*](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- [*Teaching Center*](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [*Writing Studio*](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

Schedule

PREAMBLE: INTRO TO INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY

1. Thurs Aug 22 - What is this course? What is philosophy? What distinguishes good from bad arguments?

No reading for Thursday Aug 22

2. Tues Aug 27 - Evaluating arguments

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.7-22

UNIT 1: DOES GOD EXIST?

3. Thurs Aug 29 – The first cause argument

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.29-38

Selection from Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

4. Tues Sept 3 – The design argument

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.38-46

5. Thurs Sept 5 - Ontological and pragmatic arguments

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.46-53

6. Tues Sept 10 – The problem of evil

Readings:

Mackie, “Free Will and the Problem of Evil”

Antony, “No Good Reason”

Optional additional reading:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.59-75

7. Thurs Sept 12 – The problem of evil continued + the skeptical argument introduced

Readings:

Descartes, “Meditation 1” in *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*, paragraphs 5-17

Optional additional reading:
Stich & Donaldson, chp. 5, pp.77-83

UNIT 2: CAN WE KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL?

8. Tues Sept 17 - Can we refute the skeptic? Part 1: Inference to the best explanation

First paper (short response) due (Boooo!)

Required Reading:

Descartes, "Meditation 1" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chp. 2

9. Thurs Sept 19 - Can we refute the skeptic? Part 2: Is skepticism self-refuting?

Required Readings:

Rinard, "Reasoning One's Way Out of Skepticism"

10. Tues Sept 24 - Are skeptical scenarios really skeptical?

Required Readings:

Chalmers, "The Matrix as Metaphysics"

11. Thurs Sept 26 – The Gettier problem

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, Chp.8, pp.141-159

12. Tues Oct 1 – The Gettier Problem Continued

UNIT 3: FREE WILL AND RESPONSIBILITY

13. Thurs Oct 3 - **Do We Have Free Will?**

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, chp. 9, "Do We Have Free Will?", pp.161-170
Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity" (selection from Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*)

14. Tues Oct 8 - Free will and the ability to do otherwise

Readings:

Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

15. Thurs oct 10 - free will, conclusion

Readings:

Sripada, "Frankfurt's Unwilling Addicts"

UNIT 4: MIND AND SELF

16. Tues Oct 15 – Is the mind distinct from the body?

Readings:

Descartes, *Meditation VI*

Churchland, Elimination Materialism

17. Thurs oct 17 – Is artificial intelligence capable of thought?

Readings:

Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs"

18. Tues Oct 22 - Personal Identity

Second Paper Due

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.213-221

Selection from Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (first night)

19. Thurs Oct 24 - Personal Identity Continued

Readings:

Selection from Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (second & third night)

Stich & Donaldson, pp.221-242

20. Tues Oct 29 - Personal Identity Conclusion

Readings:

Dennett, "Where Am I?"

Schechtman, "Personhood and Personal Identity"

UNIT 5: ETHICS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

21. Thurs Oct 31 – Are there objective ethical facts?

Readings:

Shafer-Landau, "Ethics as Philosophy", chp.8

Stich and Donaldson, pp.243-253

22. Tues Nov 5 – Are there objective ethical facts?

Readings:

Plato, *The Euthyphro*

Stich and Donaldson, pp.243-253

23. Thurs Nov 7 – Our ethical duties to other people

Readings:

Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Stich & Donaldson, pp.309-332

24. Tues Nov 12 – Our ethical duties to other creatures

Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.309-332

Vox article: "Is There a Moral Case for Eating Meat?"

McMahan, "Eating Meat the Nice Way"

25. Thurs Nov 14 – The meaning of life

Readings:

Excerpt from Sartre, *Existentialism as Humanism*

Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"

Additional Readings:

Stich & Donaldson, pp.267-280

26. Tues Nov 19 – The meaning of life, continued

Readings:

Ismael, "The Ethical Importance of Death"

27. Thursday, Nov 21 – Catch-Up/Review

28. Tues Dec 3 – Catch-Up/Review

Final paper due (☹)

Have a wonderful vacation! (Yayyyy!)