

PHI2010: Introduction to Philosophy

Syllabus - Summer B 2024
Class# (12367); Section 4012B

Meeting times and location

Form Mondays to Fridays:

9:30AM- 10:45PM
Matherly Hall 0114.

Instructor

Marcelino Hudgson Steele

Email: mhudgsonsteele@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays: 11:00 AM -12:30M

Office Location: Griffin-Floyd Hall, Philosophy Department, Room 318

General education and writing requirement

PHI2010 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 (WR4) course. A minimum grade of C is required in the course for general education credit.

Course description

The main purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the central problems in philosophy by engaging with a selection of historical and contemporary readings. The topics will include some of the most prominent discussions in epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics. The main goal of the course is for students to learn how to identify, paraphrase, evaluate and construct good arguments orally and in written form. It presumes no background in philosophy. There will be a heavy emphasis on learning to discuss and write about philosophical issues.

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.

Required texts

There are no required texts to purchase for this course. All required readings will be made available as pdfs on Canvas.

Course website

This course is supplemented by online content in the Canvas e-Learning environment. PDF readings, an electronic copy of the syllabus, and assignment submission portals can be found on the course website.

- 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 PHI2010 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 or <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>.
- Please do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues (I am unlikely to be able to help you!).

Communication policy

Announcements

Course announcements will be posted on Canvas. You are responsible for checking Canvas at least once a week to make sure that you do not miss important announcements.

Contacting the instructor

Please feel to reach out to me directly by email if you have any questions (or would just like to chat about the course).

- Email is the most reliable way to get in touch with me outside of class.
- I make effort to respond to email from students within two (2) business days. Note that emails do sometimes get lost – due to spam filtering, for instance. Please do send me another email or come up to me after class if you do not hear back within two business days.

General education objectives and learning outcomes

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program and a General Education Core Course in Humanities. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

PHI2010 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with figures and ideas that have shaped the course of philosophical thought and discussion. Students will come to understand how different philosophers both defined and sought to answer problems in central areas of philosophy including epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and metaethics.

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 these SLO's by: (i) preparing written responses on central ideas and arguments in the philosophical works being read in the class that will serve as the basis for class discussion at regular intervals throughout the semester; (ii) participating actively in the small-group and full-class discussions, in which students will consider the effectiveness of their fellow students' ideas and reasoning; and (iii) writing two philosophical papers on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities, to be graded according to a rubric that specifies as criteria for assessment competent command of the relevant texts and material discussed in class, perspicuous identification of the issues raised by the assigned topics, and development of a response that cogently supports the students' claims with little or no irrelevance.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND RESOURCES

- *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).

Both pdfs are available in the 'Writing Information' folder under 'Files' on Canvas.

Assignments

Quizzes (30%)

There will be two quizzes to take on Canvas in this course, both worth 15%. Late quizzes will not be accepted, but you can retake quizzes that are submitted on time as many times as you like. All quizzes will be due by 11:59PM on their official due date.

Argumentative Essays (55%)

You will write two argumentative essays, each of which will count towards the university writing requirement (4000 words):

- Paper 1 (25%): 2000 words; due July 26
- Paper 2 (30%): 2000 words; due August 9

Some information about argumentative essays:

- You will need to complete both essay assignments satisfactorily (C or higher) in order to receive credit towards the writing requirement (4000 words).
- Topics and deadlines will be posted on Canvas a week before their due date.
- All essay submissions will be done on Canvas.
- No essay will be accepted after its due date except by 24-hour prior arrangement with the instructor. All papers will be due by 1:00PM on their official due date.
- I do not read drafts. However, I am happy to meet with you to discuss the ideas in your essay (as well as provide writing advice) in office hours.
- Essays will be evaluated in accordance with the Writing Assignment Rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Discussion Topic Responses and Participation (15%)

For each class meeting for which a discussion is indicated (by “Discussion”) in the Schedule, Topics, and Readings section below, students will prepare **and bring to class** an approximately 300-word written response on a topic or topics posted after the previous lecture. These responses will form the basis of in-class group work and discussion. These responses are to be given to the instructor directly by the end of the class discussion. The participation grade for the course, constituting 15% of the course grade, will be determined by the number of the discussion responses successfully completed. These responses will be graded as either ‘complete’ or ‘incomplete’. There are three total and each response is worth 5% of your total grade.

Attendance and classroom policies

Philosophy is a team sport, and you will perform best in this course if you are present and participate actively in our class. Your attendance and active participation in every class is *strongly recommended* and the best guarantee of succeeding in the class. Attendance will be taken every day, but there is no penalty for missing class (excluding Discussion Topic Response days; see section above). You are expected to attend class and to have done all assigned reading in advance. Failure to do so will

adversely affect your ability to perform well in this course. If you do attend a class meeting, it will be assumed you are prepared to participate. If you miss a class meeting, you will still be responsible for all course content and logistical information covered during the class. 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/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

Classroom Conduct

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Laptop and cellphone policy

Laptop and cellphone use is prohibited in certain moments in class.

Grading 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/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

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
78-76=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

Grades that fall exactly on the upper threshold are awarded the higher grade. See <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> for more information about UF grading policies.

UF writing requirement.

Students who successfully complete the major writing assignments in this course will earn 4000 words toward the UF Writing Requirement. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures student both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Evaluation of the two argumentative essays in this course will include feedback on grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. These essays will be evaluated according to the criteria set out in the writing assessment rubric at the end of this syllabus. Students will find a number of resources for improving their writing at the university's Writing Studio page (<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>).

For more information on the writing requirement, please see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-requirement.aspx>.

Additional information

Writing resources

- Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- *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).

Both pdfs are available in the 'Writing Information' folder under 'Files' on Canvas.

Academic Honesty

Please review the following guidelines on academic honesty:

1. [Http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php)
2. [Http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty)

You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Repeat offenders may be penalized by suspension or expulsion from the university.

All sources and assistance used in preparing your papers and presentations must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. The web creates special risks here. Cutting and pasting even a few words from a web page or paraphrasing material without a reference constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure how to refer to something you find on the internet, you can always give the URL.

ChatGPT/AI Policy

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 and TAs 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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

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](http://gatorevals.ufl.edu). 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](http://gatorevals.ufl.edu), in their Canvas course menu under [gatorevals](http://gatorevals.ufl.edu), or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Counseling and wellness/Emergencies

[Http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx), 392-1575;

The University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Writing studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshop.

Read, Think, Write (RTW) days

There will be two scheduled RTW days for this course. These are days that come immediately after paper topics have been released. During these days, we will not hold class so that you may have a day dedicated to rereading the relevant material, thinking about what you will write for your papers, and beginning to write your papers. I will also hold additional office hours on these days to provide assistance to anyone who would like advice with their papers.

Schedule, topics, and readings

Any official changes to the schedule will be announced on Canvas, and the Canvas version of the syllabus will be modified. The syllabus is divided into weeks; the items listed for a given week are to be read before classes that week. Readings can be found on Canvas.

IMPORTANT: Read all assigned material carefully **before** coming to class.

Week 1: Logic, arguments and philosophical problems

Monday, July 1: Introduction to the course, what is philosophy? What is its value?

- Required reading: The syllabus

Tuesday, July 2: Arguments

- Required reading: Cahn, Kitcher, and Sher, The Elements of Arguments (from *Exploring Philosophy*)

Wednesday, July 3: Good and bad arguments

- Required reading: McCarty, “A Brief Introduction to Logic”

Thursday, July 4: No class/ independence day.

Friday, July 5: Quiz 1

- Required reading: All of the previous readings of the week.

Week 2: Knowledge and reality

Monday, July 8: What is knowledge?

- Required reading: Plato, “Theatetus” (excerpts)

Tuesday, July 9: Is knowledge justified true belief?

- Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?” and Nagel, An Analysis of Knowledge (Chapter 4 from Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction)

Wednesday, July 10: Skepticism

- Required reading: René Descartes, Meditations I-VI

Thursday, July 11: A response to skepticism

- Required reading: G.E. Moore, “Proof of an External World”

Friday, July 12: Group discussions

- Required reading: All of the previous readings of the week.

Week 3: Mind, causation and time

Monday, July 15: What is causation?

- Required reading: Hume, Treatise (fragments)

Tuesday, July 16: what is time?

- Required reading: Saint Augustine, Confessions (fragments)

Wednesday, July 17: what is mind?

- Required reading: Dennett, Kinds of minds (fragments)

Thursday, July 18: Review and overlaps. Group discussions.

- Required reading: All of the previous readings of the week.

Friday, July 19: first paper workshop. Time travel paradoxes

- No new reading.

Week 4: Free will and determinism

Monday, July 22: Determinism

- Required reading: D’Holbach, “Of the System of Man’s Free Agency”

Tuesday, July 23: Libertarianism

- Required reading: Taylor, “Libertarianism, Defense of Free Will”

Wednesday, July 24: Compatibilism

- Required reading: Dennett, “I Couldn’t Have Done Otherwise—So What?”

Thursday, July 25: Moral responsibility without freedom

- Required reading: Harry G. Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”

Friday, July 26: second quiz; first paper due

Week 5: God and the problem of evil

Monday, July 29: Is there a God?

- Required reading: William Paley, “Natural Theology”
- Neil Manson, “The Fine-Tuning Argument,” pages 271-278

Tuesday, July 30: Is there a God?

- Required reading: Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian”

Wednesday, July 31: God and morality

- Required reading: Plato, “Euthyphro”

Thursday, August 1: Review and overlaps. Group discussions.

- Required reading: Any of the previous readings of the week.

Friday, August 2: Second paper workshop.

- No new reading.

Week 6: Ethics and the meaning of life

Monday, August 5: Utilitarianism

- Required reading: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Tuesday, August 6: Categorical imperative

- Required reading: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

Wednesday, August 7: Categorical imperative (continuation)

- Required reading: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

Thursday, August 8: The meaning of life

- Susan Wolf, “The Meanings of Lives”

Friday, August 9: conclusions Second paper due

WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A	B	C	D	E
<p>• The response to the prompt shows significant insight into the issues relevant to the prompt. • All relevant aspects of the material are fully and correctly explained. • The discussion is sensitive and responsive to major potential objections to the student's position found in the relevant course material. • There are no significant misunderstandings of the relevant issues or texts.</p> <p>• The main thesis is supported by a discernible argument that answers the prompt. • The main thesis is well supported. • All relevant premises are properly supported. • The argument shows creativity or independent thought.</p>	<p>• Most relevant aspects of the material are fully and correctly explained. • The discussion is generally sensitive and responsive to major potential objections to the student's position found in the relevant material. • There are no significant misunderstandings of the relevant issues or texts.</p> <p>• The main thesis is supported by a discernible argument that answers the prompt. • The main thesis is well supported. • All relevant premises are properly supported OR most of the crucial premises are supported and the argument shows creativity</p>	<p>• Many relevant aspects of the material are fully and correctly explained. • The discussion is somewhat sensitive and responsive to major potential objections to the student's position found in the relevant material. • There is no more than one significant misunderstanding of the relevant issues or texts.</p> <p>• The main thesis is supported by a discernible argument that answers the prompt. • The argument has enough merit to be worth considering, but either the argument for the main thesis is only moderately developed or crucial premises need support.</p>	<p>• Some relevant aspects of the material are fully and correctly explained, but the discussion also seems based in some confusion or lack of attention. • There is evidence of some non-trivial understanding of the relevant issues or texts despite significant confusion as well. • The discussion is only minimally sensitive to major potential objections to the student's position found in the relevant material</p> <p>• The main thesis is supported by a discernible argument that answers the</p>	<p>• Few relevant aspects of the material are fully and correctly explained. • There is no evidence of understanding the relevant issues or texts beyond a trivial level..</p> <p>• Either there is no discernible argument for the main thesis, any discernible argument is so lacking in merit and relevance that it is not possible to find anything in it that might be</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serious potential objection to the student's argument is well-explained and sufficiently developed such that the objection has prima facie plausibility. • The response is relevant to the objection considered and show a good understanding of the issues at hand. • The response is well-developed and has significant merit. • The response shows creative and independent thought. • There are no points at which it is difficult to understand both what is being said and why. • The text is focused and organized. • The text is efficient, lacking extraneous filler or irrelevant material. 	<p>or independent thought.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serious potential objection to the student's argument is generally well-explained and sufficiently developed such that the objection has prima facie plausibility. • The response is relevant to the objection considered and shows a generally good understanding of the issues at hand. • The response is mostly well developed and is prima facie plausible. • There are no points at which it is difficult to understand both what is being said and why. • The text is focused and organized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serious potential objection the student's argument is somewhat well explained and sufficiently developed such that the objection has some prima facie plausibility. • The response is at least somewhat relevant to the objection considered, though it shows some lack of understanding of the issues at hand. • The response is somewhat well developed and has some prima facie plausibility. • There is at most one point at which it is difficult to understand both what is being said and why. • While the text may lack some focus, it is possible to relate most parts of it to the main points being made. 	<p>prompt. • The argument is at least somewhat relevant to the main thesis, but crucial lines of support need significantly more development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serious potential objection to the student's argument is somewhat explained, but not enough to make it prima facie plausible. • The response may be aimed at the objection considered but it doesn't in fact answer the objection. • The response is either not well developed, or it lacks any prima facie plausibility. 	<p>worked into an argument worth considering, or the argument does not answer the prompt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No serious potential objection is provided, or there is no serious effort at developing the objection. • The response to the objection is hasty, careless or entirely without merit. • There are several points at which it is not possible to understand, without strenuous effort beyond
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no egregious mechanical errors. • There are very few, if any, moderate mechanical errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no egregious mechanical errors. • There are a few moderate mechanical errors but not so many as to be a distraction to the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 1-2 egregious mechanical errors OR There are some moderate mechanical errors, posing a small distraction to the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several points at which it is not possible to understand, without significant effort, both what is being said and why. • The text has some discernible organization. • There are 3 egregious mechanical errors OR There are many moderate mechanical errors, posing a greater distraction to the reader. 	<p>what any reader should be expected to make, both what is being said and why.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 4 or more egregious mechanical errors OR A majority of the text is afflicted with moderate mechanical errors.
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