

# Introduction to Philosophy (PHI 2010)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Does God exist? Do we have free will? Is eating meat morally wrong? How do you know that you're not dreaming right now? Could you survive the death of your body?

This course will introduce you to the kinds of questions philosophers think about and the tools they use to answer them. It will also help you develop a variety of useful skills, such as writing clearly and persuasively, constructing and evaluating arguments, and breaking down complex ideas to make them easier to understand. Readings will include both historical and contemporary texts.

The course counts towards the Humanities (H) general education requirement and the Writing (W) requirement (6000 words).

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION & SLOS

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**Catalog course description:** In this course, students will be introduced to the nature of philosophy, philosophical thinking, and 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.

**General Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will develop demonstrate an understanding of classical western philosophical views, develop critical thinking skills, and analyze, explain and evaluate foundational concepts of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics

## MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION

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Lecture (Grant) T, R, 9.35-10.25 AM Fine Arts B 0105	Discussion (Calhoun) Section 2000: F 9.35-10.25 AM Section 2001: F 10.40-11.30 AM Section 2002: F 12.50-1.40 PM
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## INSTRUCTORS

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Dr. Lyndal Grant  
Email: [l.grant@ufl.edu](mailto:l.grant@ufl.edu)  
Office hours: T, R, 2-3 PM  
Office location: 302 Griffin Floyd Hall

Teaching Assistant:  
Jacob Calhoun  
Email: [calhounc@ufl.edu](mailto:calhounc@ufl.edu)

Your TA is a graduate student in philosophy who will lead your Friday classes, grade your papers, and do many other things besides. Your TA is your email contact for questions about administrative matters in the course.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

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Gideon Rosen et al., *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* (2nd Edition)

- You will need to purchase or rent a physical or electronic copy of the textbook.
- Any other texts will be free and available on our course Canvas site.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

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### General Education Requirement and Objective

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>

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.

### Writing Requirement and Objective

This course confers 4000 words towards the Writing Requirement (WR), which 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, the instructor will 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 an overall course grade of C or higher, a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

### 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 objection and responding to those objections charitably, and (iv) speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and challenging matters raised by the philosophical material in the course.

## COURSE WEBSITE

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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 PHI 3681 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!).

## ASSESSMENT

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### Quizzes (10%)

To help you stay on top of the readings and to ensure regular attendance there will be quizzes on the material during lectures throughout the semester. You will not know in advance when a quiz will happen. If you have obtained an excused absence from class on the day of a quiz, you will be able to take the quiz (or some version thereof) once you are able. It is your responsibility to obtain excused absences from your TA and to check if you have missed a quiz.

### Papers (60%)

You will be required to write three essays for this course. Detailed essay instructions and prompts will be distributed *at least two weeks prior to the due date* of the essay assignment.

**Essay #1:** This essay will be a minimum of 1200 words and a maximum of 1400 words. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.

***Worth 15% of your final grade.***

**Essay #2:** This essay will be a minimum of 1600 words and a maximum of 1800 words. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.  
**Worth 20% of your final grade.**

**Essay #3:** This essay will be a minimum of 1900 words and a maximum of 2000 words. This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.  
**Worth 25% of your final grade.**

- You will need to complete all paper assignments satisfactorily (C or higher) in order to receive credit towards the writing requirement (4000 words).
- Topics will be posted on Canvas.
- Papers submitted late without a good excuse will be penalized by 3% for each day late. No papers will be accepted after the end of classes.
- As a general rule, I do not read drafts as it is not feasible to do this for all the students who request it. However, I am more than happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss the ideas in your paper and to provide writing advice.

Students will also find a number of resources for improving their writing at the university's Writing Studio page (<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>), including a link to an electronic version of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* (<http://www.bartleby.com/141/>), the recommended style manual for this course.

A writing rubric for your essays is attached as an addendum to this syllabus.

### Mid Semester Exam (15%)

You will be required to complete a mid-semester take-home exam. This will take the form of a number of writing prompts based on texts and topics we have covered in class. You will be required to give a short, written responses, totaling roughly 1300 words.

### Participation (15%)

Philosophy is a group activity that depends on conversation. For this class to function well everyone needs to do the reading *before the relevant lecture*. However, there is no expectation that you will have thoroughly *understood* the reading prior to lecture. That's what class and our discussions are for, and even then, you will probably still have questions.

Your participation grade is based on how prepared you are for class on a regular basis and your willingness to participate by contributing questions and comments while responding to others in a respectful and attentive way.

To do well, you should demonstrate consistent, high-quality participation. *High-quality* contributions to discussion are *informed* (i.e., show evidence of having done assigned work), *thoughtful* (i.e., show evidence of having considered issues raised in readings and other discussions), and *considerate* (e.g., take the perspectives of others into account).

- If you need to miss your discussion section or lecture for any reason, please contact your TA as soon as possible to discuss whether the absence will be excused and what sort of documentation will be necessary (if applicable).

- You are allowed one unexcused absence from discussion section.
- Unexcused absences after the first one will affect your participation grade.
- Poor conduct in class will also result in a deduction from your participation grade. Examples of poor conduct include
  - disruptive behavior
  - falling asleep
  - looking at your phone
  - checking email, etc.

Grade	Criteria
A	1. Student makes consistent, high quality contributions to class discussion. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over.
B	1. Student is often an active participant in class discussion whose contributions are sometimes of high quality. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over.
C	1. Student is an active listener of class discussion but is mostly silent. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over.
D	1. Student is disruptive of class space or conversation, either actively or passively. 2. Student is disrespectful of other students or instructors.
E	1. Student fails to participate in any non-trivial way.

### Writing requirement

This class qualifies for 4000 words of credit for the university writing requirement. Note that there is a separate grade for the writing component. To receive a satisfactory grade for the writing component of this class, you must earn an average grade of C or higher for your papers. For more information on the writing requirement, please see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-requirement.aspx>.

Your TA will evaluate and provide feedback on written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.

### Writing style guide

This is an introductory course so you are not expected to already know how to write a philosophy paper.

Teaching you this skill is our job!

You can find information about what a philosophy paper is supposed to achieve, how it should be structured, and how to approach writing one here: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

We will also go over all of this at length both in class lectures and in discussion sections before the first paper is due.

## GRADING SCALE

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

<u>C±</u>	77 – 79%		<u>E</u>	<60
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For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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### Instructor Contact

**Please email your TA if you have administrative questions** that your syllabus and other documents cannot answer.

If you want to arrange a meeting with me or if you need to discuss relevant difficulties on your end, email me directly ([l.grant@ufl.edu](mailto:l.grant@ufl.edu)).

**We don't do philosophy over email**; it is inefficient and likely to lead to misunderstanding. If you have substantive philosophical questions, **come visit us in office hours** so that we can have a better conversation.

### Electronic Devices

**No electronics policy:** Most electronic devices—including phones and laptops—should be silenced, and you will need to suspend interaction with them during class. This means you will need to bring a non-electronic way take notes, as you won't be able to use these devices to facilitate in-class activity. The one exception to this rule is the use of tablets (like ipads), which, in virtue of being less distracting to other classmates, will allowed to for note-taking. Exceptions to this policy are available for those who need to use electronic devices for reasons of accessibility.

Students are allowed by law to record video or audio of class lectures. If you choose to do this, please set it up prior to the start of class. **The purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled.** A student who circulates a recording, even to another student in the course, without written consent of the instructor, 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.

### Academic Honesty

Please review the following guidelines on academic honesty:

1. <https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/copyright/plagiarism>
2. [https://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/media/flexible.dceufl.edu/documents/uf\\_policy\\_student\\_conduct.pdf](https://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/media/flexible.dceufl.edu/documents/uf_policy_student_conduct.pdf)

**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.

Please note: **“self-plagiarism”**, in which you submit work for one class that you completed for another, is still plagiarism, and will be treated as such.

**Students are not permitted to use large language models (such as ChatGPT) or other AI-based text generation tools to complete written assignments for this course. Submitting work produced using one of these tools without prior written authorization constitutes academic dishonesty.**

If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, or about how to properly cite and acknowledge other work, please come and chat to me!

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.

### Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “[Get Started With the DRC](#)” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. 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.

### Classroom Conduct

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, 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.

### Attendance, Illness, Religious Holidays, and Twelve Day Rule

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>.

Excerpt from the statement on absences:

“Absences count from the first class meeting. In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.”

### Course evaluation process

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

### Counseling and wellness/Emergencies

<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



## Topics and readings

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### Unit 1: Should we believe in God?

#### Week 1

Jan 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>

- Syllabus
- Anselm of Canterbury, “The Ontological Argument”

#### Week 2

Jan 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>

- Paley, “The Argument from Design”

#### Week 3

Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>

- Pascal, “The Wager”
- Antony, “No Good Reason—Exploring the Problem of Evil”

### Unit 2: What’s the right thing to do?

#### Week 4

Feb 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>

- Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

#### Week 5

Feb 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>

- Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

### *Paper 1 Due Friday Feb.14<sup>th</sup>*

#### Week 6

Feb 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>

- Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”

#### Week 7

Feb 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>

- Norcross, Alistair. “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

### Unit 3: How can we know about the external world?

#### Week 8

Mar 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>

- Descartes, “Meditation I: What Can Be Called into Doubt”
- Vogel, “Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation”

*Mid-semester exam Friday March 7<sup>th</sup>*

**Week 9**

March 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>

- Hume, “Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding” and “Skeptical Solution of These Doubts”

*Spring break*

*Paper 2 due Monday March 24<sup>th</sup>*

Unit 4: What is personal identity?

**Week 10**

Mar 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>

- Locke, “Of Identity and Diversity”

**Week 11**

Apr 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>

- Swinburne, “The Dualist Theory”
- Parfit, “Personal Identity”

**Week 12**

Apr 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>

- Strawson, “Free Will”

Unit 5: Do we possess free will?

**Week 13**

Apr 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>

- Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self”
- Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity”

**Week 14**

Apr 22

*No reading*

*Paper 3 due Friday April 26<sup>th</sup>*

<b>ADDENDUM: WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC</b>					
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>RESPONSE TO PAPER TOPIC, FOCUSED USE OF TEXTS AND COURSE MATERIAL</b>	• 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.
<b>INTRO &amp; THESIS</b>	• 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.
<b>PARAGRAPH</b>	• 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.
<b>STRUCTURE OF ARGUMENT</b>	• 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.
<b>STRENGTH OF ARGUMENT</b>	• 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.
<b>USE OF EVIDENCE</b>	• 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.