

Quest 1: The Conflict of Ideas

Spring 2023
Complete Syllabus

Each student is responsible for reading the complete course syllabus and being familiar with the policies and procedures set out therein. You should be sure to review it prior to the end of the drop/add period.

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1. Basic information

1.1 Instructor and TA information

Instructor:

Dr. D. Gene Witmer
gwitmer@ufl.edu
308 Griffin-Floyd Hall
Office phone: (352) 273-1830

Teaching Assistants:

Ms. Anastasia Gavrilos (agavrilos@ufl.edu)
Mr. Christopher Becker (c.becker@ufl.edu)

1.2 Meeting times and locations

This is a class with multiple sections, where the entire class meets together for two hours a week (these are called "lecture sessions") and each individual section meets with a Teaching Assistant one hour a week (these are called "breakout sessions"). The lecture sessions meet every Monday and Wednesday period 4 (10:40AM - 11:30AM) in Weil Hall 270. The breakout sessions meet at various times on Fridays.

Lecture sessions (all students meet)

Mondays and Wednesdays
Period 4 (10:40 - 11:30)
Weil Hall 270

Breakout sessions (students in the indicated sections meet)

Class #	TA	Times	Location
1WW1	Becker	Period 3 (9:35 - 10:25)	Turlington Hall 2318
1WW2	Becker	Period 4 (10:40 - 11:30)	Turlington Hall 2354
1WW3	Gavrilos	Period 5 (11:45 - 12:35)	Rinker Hall 215
1WW4	Becker	Period 6 (12:50 - 1:40)	Rinker Hall 106
1WW5	Gavrilos	Period 7 (1:55 - 2:45)	Ustler Hall 108
1WW6	Gavrilos	Period 8 (3:00 - 3:50)	Ustler Hall 108

1.3 Office hours

Office hours are times set aside so that we are available for you to ask questions, discuss material, and so on. *You do not need a special appointment to show up for office hours*; you can simply come by at that time. In case there are problems meeting during regular office hours and we need to meet, we can make appointments at other times.

Dr. Witmer's office hours

Fridays 11:00AM - 2:00pm
And by appointment

Ms. Gavrilos's office hours

TBA

Mr. Becker's office hours
TBA

Note that regular office hours are not held during holidays or after the last day of classes (during reading days and exam week). However, appointments during such times might be available if needed.

1.4 Required texts

Most of the readings for this course will be made available to you as PDF files on the Canvas site. There is one text, however, that you will need to purchase:

Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, fifth edition. Hackett Publishing 2017.
ISBN for paperback version: 978-1-62466-654-4
ISBN for Adobe PDF ebook version: 978-1-62466-655-1

Print copies should be available at the UF bookstore. An electronic copy (the Adobe ebook version) is perfectly acceptable. (Previous editions of the book have not been reviewed to see if they're acceptable, but brand new versions of the fifth edition are at the time of this writing a mere \$13 at Amazon.)

Please note that you are required to have the readings accessible to you during class, both lecture and breakout sessions. The PDFs from the Canvas site can be printed out if you like, but however you retain them, you must be able, during class, to look up the readings at issue and review the text. (I might ask you during lecture, for instance, "What does so-and-so say after that question?" and you need to be able to look it up.) The same goes for the Weston book.

2. Course overview

2.1 Course description

We live in a time of heated disagreement — over politics, religion, culture, and more. We would prefer these not become violent conflicts. Often, however, we cannot just agree to disagree; a fight of some sort is inevitable. But can we make it a fair fight? We look to work in logic, language, and psychology to explore our options for engaging in the conflict of ideas in a way that is both fair and productive.

As a Quest 1 course, this course aims to address certain essential questions — questions that we cannot avoid but which are not straightforward to answer. In particular, this course falls under the "War and Peace" theme for Quest 1; see a description of the various themes and questions here: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/uf-quest/faculty/quest-1/q1-themes-and-essential-questions/>).

2.2 Subjects and readings

All readings are subject to change depending on our speed of progress; I may delete readings or add others as seems appropriate given student interests and comprehension. *For details, always consult the most recently updated schedule for the course available on the Canvas site.* Below is an overview of topics and readings. Details on the readings, including bibliographic information, will be found on the schedule page.

Introductory

- Rose 2021. "How I Liberated my College Classroom."
- Goodman 2022. "The Elusive Civil Classroom."

Part 1: Avoiding and facing conflict

- Corvino 2015. "The Fact/Opinion Distinction."
- Satris 1986. "Student Relativism."
- Haack 1999. "Staying for an Answer."

Part 2: Argumentation and knowledge

- Kuhn 2005. "Why Argue?"
- Mill 1859. "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion."
- Stebbing 1939. "Slipping Away from the Point."
- Weston 2017. Chapters 1-7 of *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Chapters 1-7.

Part 3: Issues for practice

- Turing 1950. The Turing Test (selection).
- Searle 1990. The Chinese Room (selection).
- Cahn 2007. "Freedom or Determinism?"
- Nahmias 2011. "Is Neuroscience the Death of Free Will?"
- Telfer 2004. "'Animals Do It Too!': The Franklin Defense of Meat-Eating."
- McMahan 2010. "The Meat Eaters."

Part 4: Conflict in context

- Frances 2014. Chapters 1 through 6 of *Disagreement*.
- Eggert. *Video lecture* on pragmatic implicature.
- Block (TrevTutor). *Video lecture* on pragmatic implicature.
- Nisbett and Ross. 1980. "Judgmental Heuristics and Knowledge Structures."
- Levy 2022. "How Our Minds Are Made Up."

Part 5: Troublemakers

- Ross and Anderson 1982. Belief perseverance (selection).
- Klein 2014. "How Politics Makes Us Stupid."
- Peterson 2020. "Can Scientific Knowledge Separate the Wheat from the Tares?"
- Nguyen 2020. "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles."
- Aikin & Talisse 2019. "Pushovers" and "Language, Spin, and Framing."

Part 6: Final thoughts

- Lynch 2017. "Teaching Humility in an Age of Arrogance."
- Aroosi 2022. "On the Necessity of Incivility."
- Kornblith 1999. "Distrusting Reason."

2.3 Learning objectives

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

1. Identify disagreements and recognize factors that make the fair assessment of conflicting views difficult. (Content)
2. Recognize the structure of arguments, identify errors in reasoning, and assess arguments in a fair fashion. (Critical Thinking)
3. Represent contrary views in a fair way and present one's own arguments clearly and effectively. (Communication)
4. Recognize one's own habits of reasoning and identify both strengths and weaknesses in those habits. (Connection)

Most of the assignments in this class are relevant to SLOs 1-3; quizzes are relevant to SLO1; the basic essay assessments are relevant to SLO2, writing exercises and essays are relevant to SLOs 1-3; and the interview and report are relevant to SLO4.

2.4 General Education credit: Humanities, Writing Requirement and Quest 1

This course provides credit towards three different General Education requirements. Please note that a grade of C for the course is necessary to receive such credit. (And for the Writing Requirement, a grade of C is necessary but not sufficient—see below.)

First, the course provides credit towards the *General Education Humanities* requirement. For that requirement and its official objectives, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-programs/general-education/#objectivesandoutcomestext>.

Second, it provides 2000 words of credit towards UF's *Writing Requirement*. For that requirement and its official description, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/writing-requirement/>. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. The two essay assignments in this class fulfill this requirement. By the end of the course, you will be provided feedback on both of these written assignments with respect not only to content but also with respect to mechanical matters—grammar, punctuation, and the like.

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. To receive a satisfactory completion of the (relevant) writing component of the course, the average grade for your two essays must be a C or better. Note that it is possible to get a C for the course overall while failing to get the Writing Requirement, since you could do poorly on the essays but well enough on other aspects to make up for that. For the WR credit you must do both: get a C for the overall course and have an average grade of C for just the two essay assignments.

A Writing Assessment Rubric is attached to this syllabus as an appendix.

Third, the course satisfies the Quest 1 requirement for UF students. For that requirement and its official objectives, see <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/uf-quest/faculty/quest-1/q1-objectives-and-slos/>. The main idea is to provide incoming students with a chance to take a course that is not just a survey of some required material but is about something genuinely interesting and challenging, something concerning an important question or questions that we all face. In this class, the essential question is really this: Given the often difficult disagreements we find ourselves in, how should we best — effectively, fairly, honestly — approach those disagreements?

3. Class routine

3.1 Schedule

The schedule of readings and assignments is available as a downloadable PDF on the Canvas page; it will be updated as appropriate. I reserve the right to adjust that schedule as needed to accommodate our speed of progress and student comprehension.

The schedule is organized by weeks and specifies the topics, readings, and assignments for that week. One sort of assignment — writing exercises — is always due in to Canvas by the end of the day on Wednesday of the relevant week; one assignment (Basic essay assessment) is due in to Canvas by the morning of Friday 2/10; and the others are due in to Canvas by the end of the day Sunday of the relevant week. In summary:

Quizzes	In class using iClicker for most lecture sessions
Writing exercises	Canvas 11:59PM Wednesday of the relevant week
Basic essay assessment	Canvas 7:00AM Friday 2/10
Argumentative essay 1	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 3/5

Interview and report	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 4/2
Argumentative essay 2	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 4/23

Another note on how to read the schedule: readings are listed as assigned for a given week. This means that they should be read *before* the Monday lecture session unless I explicitly say otherwise.

3.2 Lecture meetings

Note that while "lecture session" is a typical name for the meetings attended by all in the class, it is a bit misleading; it might lead you to think that all that happens in such a meeting is a lecture without you, the student, having to do anything but sit there passively. That is not the case. The lecture sessions will include (very) short quizzes and some degree of discussion; attendance at the lecture session is required (and recorded) and you might be called on to answer questions or share your thoughts during those sessions even when you are not volunteering. In addition, you should feel free to ask questions or make comments during the lecture session at any point. If I think it best to leave the question or comment till later, I will ask you to wait, but usually I am happy to address your thoughts immediately.

3.3 Breakout sessions

Breakout sessions are meetings limited to the students in your particular session. These are led by our Teaching Assistants, who have authority to determine how those meetings will be run. Very often breakout sessions will be occupied by discussion of a "writing exercise" assignment that was due that week (see below for information on what those are), but other activities will include such things as in-class group activities responding to specific tasks set by the TA, the class working together to come up with a response to a particular worry, or the like. Just as in lecture sessions, you may be called on to answer questions or share your thoughts even when you are not volunteering to speak up.

While Teaching Assistants will come to those sessions with a specific agenda for the discussion that day, you should feel free to raise any questions or worries of your own that you feel urgently needed to be addressed; it will be up to the TA's discretion how much time needs to be spent on those instead of the previously planned agenda.

4. Requirements

4.1 General expectations and overview

As a student in this class, you are expected to

- be familiar with all policies and requirements as set out in the complete course syllabus
- attend and participate in all class sessions (unless excused for a legitimate reason)
- be aware of all deadlines throughout the semester
- stay informed by keeping up with all announcements made in class
- maintain academic integrity in all of your work—or risk failing the entire course
- be respectful of your classmates, even when engaged in lively critical dialogue with them
- inform the instructor promptly of any emergencies or problems that will affect your ability to do what is needed in the course ask questions and seek help when you need it

Merely showing up is obviously not enough, of course. I expect both that you will come to class having read the assigned material and prepared to discuss that material with the class. I urge you to make the most of class time by making some notes for yourself when doing assigned readings, where those notes specify things that puzzle you, objections that occur to you, and so on. Doing such preparatory work will make the class time more fruitful for us all.

The assignments in this class fall into four main kinds: very short quizzes, writing exercises, essays, and two other kinds of homework assignments, one of which is a group project. More specifically:

- *Quizzes.* Simple in-class iClicker quizzes
- *Writing exercises.* Mandatory writing assignments not individually graded.
- *Basic essay assessment.* Group project providing a report on an essay we will provide.
- *Interview and report.* Individual project in which you interview someone outside of class and provide a report on the results.
- *Two essays.* Argumentative essays, including for the second additional comments.

You may notice that nothing about a midterm or final exam is mentioned above. That is because *there is no midterm or final exam* for this class! In my experience, such high-stakes in-class exams are of little value for undergraduates, both in terms of their learning from them and in terms of my learning from them how well you understand things. On my view it is crucial for assessed work to be spread throughout the semester; such regular but less stressful work is better for your understanding and longer-term retention.

More details on each of these assignments is found below. For the way they factor into the course grade, see §5.3 on course grade determination. Final details for assignments will be provided on the assignments page on Canvas.

4.2 Quizzes

The quizzes in this class are very simple *iClicker* quizzes that you take at the beginning of lecture sessions. "iClicker" is a simple application free for use by UF faculty and students, and you only need to download the application to a smartphone to use it. (If you do not have smart phone, let us know so we can make other arrangements.)

The quizzes are intended to be quite straightforward and meant to keep you on your toes, so to speak, throughout the semester. For most lecture sessions you will have one of these quizzes near the start of the session; the quiz will consist of *just one* multiple-point question and you will have only a few minutes to answer it. Answers are recorded and the quiz portion of your course grade is based on the percentage of correct answers you provided.

Given the number of classes, I expect there to be about 25 quizzes, though the number may vary depending on circumstances. The quiz grade will be based a very simple scale:

Percentage correct	Quiz grade
90%	A
80%	B
70%	C
60%	D
Under 60%	E

If there are in fact 25 quizzes, this means that you need to get the right answer on 23 of the 25 questions that are asked throughout the semester. This may seem to leave little room for error, and that's right. But I should emphasize that of all the assignments in this class, the quizzes will be the easiest. They will simply make sure you have done the assigned reading and have understood it to some basic extent.

If you miss a class due to an excused absence and as a result miss one of the short quizzes, your percentage will be based on the smaller total of quizzes you do take, unless you end up missing for good reason more than 5 quizzes. In that case, you will need to take a special exam outside of regular class

hours that will substitute for the quizzes you missed. If with good excuse you miss, say, 7 quizzes, that special exam will require you to answer 7 different questions (different from the ones used in classes you missed).

4.3 Writing exercises

What I call “writing exercises” or just “exercises” are short, mandatory writing assignments that are not individually graded. They are meant to force you to practice thinking and writing about the issues in the class without causing you anxiety about a grade. The credit you earn here is basically credit for effort. Just do your best to answer the question as well as you can while being as clear as you can.

Writing exercises are to be handed in online via Canvas. There is no specific word count target for exercises; you should simply do your best to answer the question. While you do not get individual feedback on your exercises, we always read all of them and select some of them for use in class. Keep in mind that there are *two* main ways in which you learn from these exercises. First, in the process of writing them, you will have to think more about the material and gain skills in writing about these issues. Second, when we go over selected exercises in class, you can correct your misunderstandings by comparison with what we get clear on in that discussion. Be sure to compare the thoughts you arrived at in your exercises with class discussion of the same material.

Exercises are always due in by 11:59PM on Wednesday of the relevant week. This ensures that we have time to look at them all on Thursday, get a sense of how well the class is understanding the material, and select some for use in Friday's breakout sessions — keeping them anonymous, of course. Obviously, only a small portion of these will actually be discussed in those sessions, but during those sessions you should feel free to raise questions about the material that in effect help illuminate how good or poor your own exercise might have been. You are also welcome to bring in any of your individual exercises to office hours to discuss with us.

Your score for the exercise portion of your course grade is determined simply by how many of these you do—at least, so long as you make a real effort for each one. These are not individually graded, but if you hand in an exercise that seems to show no effort, you will be given one warning; if you do it again, that exercise will not be counted (even if it's a much later exercise).

Here is how the exercise participation portion of your grade is determined. If you do all of them and make a real effort, you get a perfect A (4) grade for the exercise portion of your course grade. For each one you fail to hand in (or which is not counted because you didn't make any real effort), that grade goes down by a full letter. The rule is simple: the grade drops by one letter for the first three missing exercises, after which the exercise participation part of your grade goes to zero:

# Missing exercises	Exercise grade
0	A
1	B
2	C
3	D
4 or more	E

I call these *exercises* because doing them on a regular basis vastly improves your chances of understanding the issues and thinking about the questions we're focused on. They should also be a rather easy way to bolster your course grade. You don't want to neglect them!

4.4 Basic essay assessment

There is one group assignment in this class. Each section will be broken into groups of 3 to 4 people each. We will determine the group membership in early February and let you know so that you can make sure you have good ways to communicate with each other. The assignment is to do a basic assessment of an essay I will give you. You will not see that essay until after class on Wednesday 2/8. You should have by that time made plans with your group to meet and discuss it on Thursday 2/9 so you can compose the report and upload it by the morning of Friday 2/10 — by 7:00AM at the latest.

The basic assessment will consist of your group's answers to a small handful of questions about the essay I provide to you. The questions focus primarily on locating the essay's problems but include a question on how you might advise the author to improve on the essay.

4.5 Interview and report

This project is a kind of "experiential learning" assignment. In brief, the idea is to select someone you know to disagree with you on something, where even if that topic is not in itself terribly important (for example, on whether it's more enjoyable to relax on a vacation or to experience new things) it's a disagreement that you take seriously enough that each of you think the other is missing something important. Upon getting permission from that person, you will conduct an interview about their views on this matter in which you try to get a better understanding of why they hold this view with which you disagree. The interview will not itself be a debate or an attempt to convince each other; it will be primarily diagnostic — you trying to get a sense of what reasons they have for the view, how they think about those reasons, and so on. The interview is not one you will be recording in audio or visual form; you will need to pay attention to what they say and take notes.

The report will concern what you found out about the sources of your disagreement; it will ask you to specify what it is you disagree about, what you think leads to that disagreement, how you think you might proceed if you were trying to resolve the disagreement, and your reflections on what you've learned about how you've formed your own views on that issue.

4.6 Two argumentative essays

There are two argumentative essays required for this class. Both deal with some issues introduced in the section "Issues for practice." These will be issues on which people are likely to disagree seriously and the practice is intended to develop your skills at arguing for one side on those disagreements.

The first essay should be in the range of 1000 to 1250 words. The assignment is to take a stand on one of the issues in those readings and present an original argument for that claim, anticipate objections, and respond to those objections.

The second essay should be in the range of 1000 to 2000 words. The assignment includes, however, something in addition to the essay itself. The idea behind this second essay assignment is that you will not simply write up a new essay but consider someone else's essay on one of these issues, write up a (short) report on some flaws you see in that other essay, and then write up a new essay that develops what you see in the other essay that is valuable or promising. The word count range is wider because you should have more freedom in expanding on things.

An important point about this second essay is that, while you are to develop ideas in that other essay that you are using for inspiration, you are *not allowed to copy and paste any of the text in that other essay*. You are allowed to use its ideas, but none of its wording. The ideas must, further, *be developed beyond the original*. If your second essay is simply a better worded version of the first one with no new and helpful ideas or arguments, it will receive a failing grade. The idea is not to revise the first one but to consider what is valuable in it and write a new essay incorporating the valuable ideas.

As a fallback, if you find yourself unable to locate something valuable in the essays made available that you can develop further, you may write something entirely new for credit. But the essays we will make available to you in fact have something valuable in them, and you will be foregoing a useful resource if you take that route instead.

The essays made available to you for this purpose will in fact be essays on these topics written by other UF undergraduate students, perhaps ones in your own section. Note that if your own previous essay is made available as an option for this assignment, you are not allowed to use it. Others may use it, but the temptation to simply recycle what you did before will be too great, so we are prohibiting your using your own.

5. Grading information

5.1 General grade information

In accordance with UF policy, a grade of C- or lower for the course is not a qualifying grade satisfying any requirements beyond a sheer number of credits. Other information on current UF grading policies in general can be found in the UF catalog at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

The grading system I use is not one that fits perfectly well into the grade book function on Canvas. Hence, I will not use that system, so you should **not** look to what Canvas provides you by way of information to find out how you are doing. Instead, as a courtesy to you, I provide you with an Excel spreadsheet that you can download and use to keep track of your own grades. This will be posted on the homepage of the Canvas site for you to download.

5.2 Grade scale

Many faculty use a grade scale based on 100 points—defining an A as a score between (for example) 94 and 100, an A- as 90 to 93, and so on. For various reasons I am convinced this is not a good method for calculating grades in most of the work I assign. (The quiz grade in this class uses percentages, but they're certainly not the usual ones.) Instead, grades in my classes are (mostly) based on the 4-point scale for letter grade values, where an A is 4 points, an A- is 3.67 points, and so on.

Grades are initially determined according to a letter grade; they are then entered into the gradebook as numeric values. Going from the grade symbol to the numeric value looks like this:

Letter	Numeric		Letter	Numeric
A	4		C	2
A-	3.67		C-	1.67
B+	3.33		D+	1.33
B	3		D	1
B-	2.67		D-	0.67
C+	2.33		E	0

If you get a B+ on a particular assignment, for example, I enter that grade in my gradebook as 3.33. Each graded element is given a number in this way. For the course grade, each element is multiplied by its percentage weight for the course grade and the results summed for the course grade as a numeric value. The result is a numeric value between 0 and 4.

How then is that numeric value translated back to a letter grade? I take the standard value of a letter to count as the *center* of the range of numeric values that will yield that letter. In other words, I think the range of x to y should count as a B if the standard value for B (that is, 3) is in the *midpoint* of the range

between x and y . To get this result, we first think about the distance between each letter grade (which is .33) and cut it in half (.165) to get the relevant midpoint. Think of it this way. The lower endpoint for a B is halfway down to the next lower letter grade, which is a B- (2.67). Halfway down is .165 down, or 2.835. The upper endpoint for a B is halfway up to the next higher letter grade, which is a B+ (3.33). Halfway up is .165 up, or 3.165. So the range for a B is 2.835 to 3.165, which has 3 in the middle. I round up to the nearest second decimal and count the borders as belonging to the higher grade. The result is that going from the numeric value to the letter grade looks like this:

Numeric	Letter		Numeric	Letter
3.84 - 4.00	A		1.84 - 2.16	C
3.51 - 3.83	A-		1.51 - 1.83	C-
3.17 - 3.50	B+		1.17 - 1.50	D+
2.84 - 3.16	B		0.84 - 1.16	D
2.51 - 2.83	B-		0.51 - 0.83	D-
2.17 - 2.50	C+		0.00 - 0.50	E

5.3 Course grade determination

The course grade is determined by the following factors with the indicated percentages:

Quizzes	10%
Writing exercises	20%
Basic essay assessment	10%
Interview and report	15%
Argumentative essay 1	15%
Argumentative essay 2	30%

To illustrate, suppose your grades were:

Factor	Letter	Numeric	Multiplied by	Result
Quizzes	B	3	.1	.3
Writing exercises	A	4	.2	.8
Basic essay assessment	B	3	.1	.3
Interview and report	A	4	.15	.6
Argumentative essay 1	C	2	.15	.3
Argumentative essay 2	B	3	.3	.9
SUMMED				3.2

The resulting sum of 3.233 counts as a B+.

6. Policies

6.1 Attendance and make-up policy

Attendance at all lecture and breakout sessions is required and recorded. For lecture sessions, we will use the iClicker application to take attendance, as well as to administer the short quizzes. For breakout sessions, TAs will verbally take attendance. No class meetings are recorded for you; if you miss a session, excused or not, *you need to take responsibility* for finding out what you have missed. You are advised to get to know some of your fellow classmates so that you can consult them for help in such cases. If you need to, you can contact us about what was missed, but we cannot reproduce lectures or the details of class discussion for you; we can only indicate what sort of material was covered and convey information about scheduling, assignments, or the like.

Attendance is not counted as a separate factor in determining your course grade except by way of potential penalties. You can accumulate three unexcused absences without penalty, but after those, each additional unexcused absence incurs a penalty. More precisely:

You can accumulate up to **THREE** unexcused absences without penalty. However, at that point every further unexcused absence incurs serious penalties. For each unexcused absence past those three, your writing exercise grade is reduced by an entire letter.

For example, if you handed in all the exercises and earned a perfect 4 for the exercise grade and missed class without any good excuse five times, then the penalty is to have your exercise participation grade reduced by two letters. In this case, the exercise grade would go from an A to a C. Note that it's easy to make an A for the exercise grade, so having that cut down because of excessive unexcused absences is really not something you want to let happen.

Note that an unexcused absence during a lecture session in which a quiz is administered means that you automatically get a 0 for that quiz grade. In case you miss a quiz for an excused reason, that quiz grade will not figure into the quiz grade; see §4.2 above for details.

If you do have a good excuse for an absence or a missed assignment, you need to get in contact with us in a reasonable amount of time and make any relevant arrangements and/or provide us information on the cause of your absence. Of course, in the case of serious illness or emergency, you should not worry about class and focus on the immediate illness or emergency, getting in touch with us only after it is feasible to do so.

UF's general policy on attendance, including an official statement of what counts as an acceptable reason for missing class, can be found in the catalog at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. In general, we aim to give students the benefit of the doubt about excuses, but we may demand documentation on a case-by-case basis. Your previous attendance and history of participation may make a difference to your credibility.

For assignments completed outside of class, an excused absence from class doesn't automatically translate into any kind of extension or make-up. You should be planning your time outside of class to allow you time to complete the graded work before the due dates. But of course illness or other disruptions can make it unreasonable to expect you to be able to complete the work in a timely fashion. In such a case, we will offer either an extension or a make-up opportunity. For writing exercises, you will normally be asked to do a make-up exercise at a later date. For graded writing assignments, an extension is more likely. Keep in mind, of course, that we may require documentation for any such excuse, depending on your credibility at that point in the class.

Late essays and papers are not accepted for credit unless by prior arrangement for a good excuse or some legitimate emergency has made it impossible for you to hand it in on time. I do not offer the option of handing in written work with a late penalty.

6.2 Academic honesty

As stated in the UF Student Honor Code [<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>], all UF students are bound by the following "Honor Pledge"

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student 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 specifies a number of activities that constitute academic dishonesty as well as the sanctions (that is, penalties) that may result, including suspension and expulsion. The policy in my classes for academic dishonesty is simple:

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All incidents are reported to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

CLEAR EVIDENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY MEANS AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE.

In submitting a report of academic dishonesty I recommend *at minimum* a failing grade for the course and cite this warning in the syllabus.

If you are at all unsure whether something might violate the code, it is your responsibility to find out. Please consult the code and/or ask the instructor.
Do not be afraid to ask.

In humanities classes, the most common kind of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. In academic writing (including any writing exercise, essay, or paper you write in this class) if you use an idea you got from someone else—whether it's one of the assigned readings, another student, something you saw online, or the like—you are obliged to inform the reader of the source of that idea. Failure to do so is plagiarism. (For information on how to cite sources, see the section on basic writing assistance §7.2 below.)

If you are ever tempted to cheat, please keep in mind that it would be better to get a failing grade for a particular assignment than to get both a failing grade for the entire course and a record of academic dishonesty on file with the University of Florida.

6.3 Academic honesty and collaboration

The honor code specifies a number of activities that constitute academic dishonesty as well as the sanctions (that is, penalties) that may result, including suspension and expulsion. Please note that *collaboration in this class is forbidden unless stated otherwise*. No student may collaborate with any other person (in this class or not) on any assigned work. If group work is assigned or this policy changes, I will provide that information in writing on individual assignment instructions.

In this class there is, of course, one group assignment — the basic essay assessment. In that case, you may only collaborate with other members of your group.

This prohibition on collaboration does not mean that you cannot make use of ideas from others that arise during the class, *so long as you give credit in an appropriate way*. For instance, in class discussion a student might say something that you want to use in your paper. You can refer to that idea in your work, so long as you include a reference like this:

as suggested in class discussion on March 1, 2016.

You can also cite the work of other students if that work is put online for the class to see. In that case, you might include a reference like this:

as suggested by an anonymous student for writing exercise #6 on March 1, 2016.

If the class includes discussion boards online where students' names are used, you can cite posts on that board with both the date and the actual student's name.

6.4 Outside sources

There are many resources out there relevant to the ideas we discuss in this class, especially online. I cannot stop you from looking at those sources, but I want to *strongly discourage* you from looking at them. Doing so will probably hurt you more than it can help you. Here's why.

- The variety of material out there is of very inconsistent quality. While there are many sites with good, informed discussion by people who know what they're talking about, there are *many* other sites about which that cannot be said.
- Even if the site you are reading has high quality material on it, there is a good chance it will be more bewildering than enlightening. Without any help in approaching the material, you could end up much more confused than before.
- If you find yourself browsing through the results of a Google search on the topics under discussion in this class, you may find yourself tempted to make use of ideas you get from what you found without citing them properly. If you do that, however, that will constitute plagiarism, and you then run the risk of getting an automatic failing grade for the course as stressed above. If you refrain from such browsing, you avoid that temptation and risk.
- Even if you are entirely conscientious and cite everything you use that you find from these outside sources, you might be tempted to do something else that, while honest, is definitely not to your advantage. This is the temptation to *lean on* the ideas of the outside sources without trying to think through the issues on your own. You are supposed to come out of this class with skills in both thinking for yourself and being critically rigorous. If you merely assemble other people's ideas, you are not developing those skills.

6.5 Help with essays

It is our policy not to look at rough drafts of essays. This is because I have learned from (frustrating) experience that commenting on actual student drafts often does more harm than good. Students find it very hard to resist reacting to such comments by thinking that their job is to make no changes in the paper other than those that are direct responses to specific comments made by the professor. And this, I can tell you, is not a good approach. Most of the time, the revisions you need to do are much more extensive than that, and it is often a good idea just to start a new file—a blank document—and start writing again, as opposed to constant tinkering with what you already wrote.

We will, however, talk with you in office hours about the ideas in your essays. You may bring to office hours notes or the like and we can talk things through verbally, but written feedback is not provided except for completed work that is receiving a grade.

6.6 Disability accommodations

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/>]. It is important for you to share your accommodation letter with your instructor so we can discuss any special access needed as early as possible in the semester.

6.7 Course evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful [<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>] feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Please note that these evaluations are anonymous and only made available to the instructor after the final grades for the course have been submitted. I always read through all of these evaluations so as to find ways to improve the course and I encourage you to complete one at the assigned time.

You will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

Public data providing summaries of course evaluation results are available online at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

7. Resources

7.1 Philosophy at UF

The Department of Philosophy at the University of Florida includes a great community of faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. If you visit the department's web page (<http://web.phil.ufl.edu>) you can find many items of interest, including announcements of upcoming philosophy-related events, Philosophy in the News, and information on the major, minor, and the undergraduate curriculum generally.

In particular, I want to draw your attention to the Undergraduate Philosophy Society. (See their page on [Facebook](#). See also their [Instagram](#).) The group normally meets once a week during fall and spring semesters; they organize reading groups, visiting speakers, and have for the last several years now organized an annual undergraduate philosophy conference bringing philosophy student from both UF and elsewhere together to present their work, get feedback, and enjoy good philosophical discussion. Getting involved in the Undergraduate Philosophy Society—often called “Phil Soc”—is a great way to get to know your fellow philosophy students, get advice on courses, find out how other philosophy students think about post-graduation plans, and so on. I recommend getting involved.

7.2 Basic writing assistance

You may find it helpful to use the influential guide by Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, available free online at www.bartleby.com/141/.

Another very useful resource is Purdue University's Online Writing Lab, also known as the “OWL.” It is especially good for getting detailed information on *how to cite sources properly*. You can find it at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

UF has a dedicated writing program with a “writing studio” that is intended to provide students with several resources for improving their writing. The site includes several resources, including links to the OWL site just mentioned and other items. See <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

The writing program provides assistance with writing for UF students, including distance students who are pursuing online-only courses. You can login to <http://tutortrac.clas.ufl.edu/> to make arrangements to meet with a tutor. I must warn you, however, that what makes for a good argumentative essay is not always understood the same way in different disciplines. In this class, anyway, what matters most in your argumentative essays are clarity, comprehension, and argumentative skill. Being eloquent or pretty is of much less importance. A clear and persuasive essay that lacks any fun metaphors or beautiful sentences is much better than one that has the latter factors but is unclear or unpersuasive. Similarly, you may

have been taught to not use "I" in your essays, but you should not follow that rule in any of the essays in this class: using "I" is very much appropriate, especially when you explain that you are arguing for such-and-such a claim in contrast to what these other people say.

Citation. Any time you quote someone or some text you must provide a reference for that quotation, including page numbers. There are several different, equally acceptable ways of providing reference information. (See <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> for information on major style guides.) If you are only citing material provided in class, I am not going to be picky about how you cite them, so long as you make it clear what you are citing and what page the material is on. If you refer to outside materials at all, however, I need to insist on two things. First, you must refer to that source wherever you use it in your own essay; second, you must include a "works cited" list at the end that provides information on the author(s), title, publisher, and date of publication. If you use an online source (other than the webpage for this class) you must also provide the complete URL and the date accessed.

7.3 Technical support

If you have questions regarding Canvas or related technology used in connection with this course, you should contact the UF Computing Help Desk through one of the following:

- Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu
- Web: <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>
- Phone: (352) 392-HELP (4357)

One thing in particular that might cause some issues for you is seeing the marginal or "in-text" feedback on writing assignments. See Canvas's instructions [<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-view-annotation-feedback-comments-from-my-instructor/ta-p/523>] for seeing that feedback. If you have trouble I can always individually prepare for you a PDF version of your work with comments easily visible, so let me know if you need me to do that.

7.4 Other support services

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 [<https://umatter.ufl.edu/>] 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 [<https://counseling.ufl.edu>] 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 [<https://shcc.ufl.edu/>].

University Police Department: Visit the UF Police Department website [<https://police.ufl.edu/>] 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 [<https://ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center>].

Library Support [<https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>] provides various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Writing Assessment Rubric

The following rubric describes the relevant factors used in determining a grade for argumentative essays in this class. It does not provide an exact formula to determine the grade. Instead, think of it this way. A paper which fits all the descriptions under "Excellent" is going to be an A, while if it's only many of them, it may be a B; a paper which fits all the descriptions under "Middling" is going to be a C, while if it's only most and there are some in the "Excellent" column, it may be a B- or C+. And so on: the table describes the kinds of factors used to arrive at a letter grade. For "egregious mechanical errors" see the list on the next page.

Factor	Excellent	Middling	Poor
CLARITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no points at which it is hard to follow what is being said or why. • The paper is focused on the main thesis and organized around the argument for it. • The paper is efficient and does not meander. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are as many as two points at which it is hard to follow what is being said or why. • The paper has some discernible organization in that most of it can be related to the main thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are several points at which it is very difficult to follow what is being said and why. • The paper has nearly no focus; it is hard even to tell just what thesis the author is trying to defend.
COMPREHENSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper shows a superior grasp of the issues and readings. • There are no significant errors of comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper shows a fair grasp of the issues and readings. • There is at most one significant error of comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper shows no grasp of the issues and readings beyond a trivial level. • There are multiple significant errors of comprehension.
MECHANICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no egregious mechanical errors. • There are only a few moderate mechanical errors, if any. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are as many as two egregious mechanical errors. • There are some moderate mechanical errors but not so many as to be a distraction to the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are multiple egregious mechanical errors. • A majority of the text is afflicted with moderate mechanical errors.
ARGUMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main thesis is supported by a readily identified argument. • The argument is relevant to the thesis and has some merit. • The argument shows original thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main thesis is supported by a readily identified argument. • The argument is relevant to the thesis and may have some merit if further developed. • The argument is not a mere rehash of arguments presented in class or in readings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main thesis is not supported by any identifiable argument or only by an extremely poor argument.
DEFENSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper considers objections to the main thesis and argument. • The paper responds to those anticipated objections in a way that is pertinent and possibly effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper considers objections to the main thesis and argument. • The paper makes a genuine attempt to respond to those objections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper fails to consider any objections to the main thesis and argument or considers only those that are too weak to be worth considering.

Nine Egregious Mechanical Errors

The following nine mechanical errors are especially bad and unfortunately common. Most explanations below are followed by an example of correct usage in italics.

1. Confusing its and it's

Its is a possessive, while it's is a contraction, short for it is.

The business did well because its CEO actually concerned herself with customer service.

It's surely going to rain soon.

2. Confusing your and you're

Your is a possessive, while you're is a contraction, short for you are.

Where did you put your keys?

You're going to have to study harder.

3. Confusing lose and loose

Lose is a verb: to lose is to fail to win or to cease to possess something. Loose is often an adjective opposite to tight; it can also be a verb meaning to untie or set free.

If you invest in this stock, you can't lose!

I like the way this dress looks, but it is just too loose to be comfortable.

When the intruders came onto the lawn, the hounds were loosed.

4. Confusing affect and effect

Affect as a verb means to cause a change, while effect as a noun indicates a change that was caused. Affect can also be used as a noun to mean a feeling, while effect can be used as a verb, where to effect something is to bring that thing about.

The foolish scientist thought that love could not affect him.

One effect of sleep deprivation is a lack of motor control.

She was in shock at the news and showed no affect at all.

By pursuing his goals over many years without giving up, he managed to effect great change.

5. Confusing than and then

Then indicates an order or consequence, while than indicates a comparison.

If Jones isn't the murderer, then I have no idea who did it.

There was nobody smarter than she.

6. Confusing their, they're, and/or there

Their is a possessive, they're is a contraction short for they are, and there indicates a place or the existence of something.

All of their possessions were insured.

They're going to get in trouble if they keep up this behavior.

The book is over there on the table.

I keep telling you that there is no Santa Claus!

7. Confusing too and to

Too indicates something that is either an addition or an excessive amount, while to is a preposition that can indicate a place, a relation, or be part of an infinitive phrase.

Was she at the party, too?

That class was just too difficult.

He went to Atlanta all of a sudden.

She gave the book to her daughter.

To be humble is not easy.

8. Confusing our and are

Our is a possessive, while are is a verb.

Our house is pink.

We are going to Atlanta this weekend.

9. Writing would of instead of would have (or: could of/could have, should of/should have)

These are errors due entirely to paying attention only to how certain phrases sound. Saying "he would have done better if he had studied more" can sound like "he would of done better if he had studied more." But "would of" is not a proper construction in English. Similarly, "should have" and "could have" can sound like they use the word "of," but there is no proper use of "should of" or "could of" in English.

**CONFLICT OF IDEAS
SPRING 2023 SCHEDULE**

This is the version of the schedule at the start of the term. The most up-to-date schedule will be found on the Canvas site.

Week	Week starting	Topic	Readings	Assignment
1	1/9	Introductory	Rose 2021 Goodman 2022	(Optional) Take survey
2	1/16 No class Monday (MLK)	Part 1: Avoiding and facing conflict	Corvino 2015 Sattris 1986	Writing Exercise 1
3	1/23	Part 1: Avoiding and facing conflict	Haack 1999 Kuhn 2005	Writing Exercise 2
4	1/30	Part 2: Argumentation and knowledge	Mill 1859 Stebbing 1939	Writing Exercise 3
5	2/6	Part 2: Argumentation and knowledge	Weston 2017 (C1-7)	Basic essay assessment (due early Friday 2/10)
6	2/13	Part 3: Issues for practice	Turing 1950 Searle 1990 Cahn 2007	Writing Exercise 4
7	2/20	Part 3: Issues for practice	Nahmias 2011 Telfer 2004 McMahan 2010	Writing Exercise 5
8	2/27	Part 4: Conflict in context	Frances 2014 Chapters 1-6	Essay 1 (due Sunday 3/5)
9	3/6	Part 4: Conflict in context	Video lectures: Eggert, Block Nisbett and Ross 1980	Writing Exercise 6
SPRING BREAK 3/13 - 3/17				
10	3/20	Part 4: Conflict in context	Levy 2022	Writing Exercise 7
11	3/27	Part 5: Troublemakers	Ross & Anderson 1982 Klein 2014	Interview and report (due Sunday 4/2)
12	4/3	Part 5: Troublemakers	Peterson 2020 Nguyen 2020	Writing Exercise 8
13	4/10	Part 5: Troublemakers	Akin & Talise 2019 (Chapters 6, 11)	None
14	4/17	Part 5: Troublemakers	No new readings - or catchup time	Essay 2 (due Sunday 4/23)
15	4/24	Part 6: Final thoughts	Lynch 2017 Aroosi 2022 Kornblith 1999	Optional: Take survey

Due dates and times

Quizzes	In class using iClicker for most lecture sessions
Writing exercises	Canvas 11:59PM Wednesday of the relevant week
Basic essay assessment	Canvas 7:00AM Friday 2/10
Argumentative essay 1	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 3/5
Interview and report	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 4/2
Argumentative essay 2	Canvas 11:59PM Sunday 4/23

Readings available on Canvas

- Aikin, Scott and Robert Talisse. 2019. "Pushovers" and "Language, Spin, and Framing." Chapters 6 and 11 of *Why We Argue (And How We Should)*, 2nd edition. Taylor & Francis.
- Aroosi, Jamie. 2022. "On the Necessity of Incivility." *The Philosophers' Magazine Essays*.
www.philosophersmag.com/essays/282-on-the-necessity-of-incivility.
- Cahn, Steven. 2007. "Freedom or Determinism?" In *Puzzles & Perplexities: Collected Essays*, Second Edition. Lexington Books.
- Corvino, John. 2015. "The Fact/Opinion Distinction." *The Philosophers' Magazine* 65: 57-61.
- Frances, Bryan. 2014. Chapters 1 through 6 of *Disagreement*. Polity Press.
- Goodman, Sylvia. 2022. "The Elusive Civil Classroom." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. August 29, 2022.
- Haack, Susan. 1999. "Staying for an Answer." *Times Literary Supplement*. July 9, 1999.
- Klein, Ezra. 2014. "How Politics Makes Us Stupid." Vox.com. April 6, 2014.
- Kornblith, Hilary. 1999. "Distrusting Reason." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23. Blackwell.
- Kuhn, Deanna. 2005. "Why Argue?" Chapter 6 of *Education for Thinking*. Harvard University Press.
- Levy, Neil. 2022. "How Our Minds Are Made Up." Chapter 3 of *Bad Beliefs: Why They Happen to Good People*. Oxford University Press.
- Lynch, Michael. 2017. "Teaching Humility in an Age of Arrogance." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. June 5, 2017.
- McMahan, Jeff. 2010. "The Meat Eaters." *The Stone: New York Times*, September 19, 2010.
- Mill, John Stuart. 1859. "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion." From *On Liberty*, 1859.
- Nahmias, Eddy. 2011. "Is Neuroscience the Death of Free Will?" *The Stone: New York Times*, November 13, 2011.
- Nguyen, C. Thi. 2020. "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles." *Episteme* 17 (2): 141-161.
- Nisbett, Richard and Lee Ross. 1980. "Judgmental Heuristics and Knowledge Structures." Chapter 2 of *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Peterson, Erik. 2020. "Can Scientific Knowledge Separate the Wheat from the Tares? A Brief History of Bias (and Fears about Bias) in Science." In Kevin McCain and Kostas Kampourakis, eds., *What Is Scientific Knowledge?* Routledge. 195-208.
- Rose, John. 2021. "How I Liberated my College Classroom." *The Wall Street Journal*. June 25, 2021.
- Ross, Lee and Craig Anderson. 1982. Belief Perseverance. Selection from "Shortcomings in the Attribution Process." In Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky, eds., *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*. Cambridge University Press.
- Satris, Stephen. 1986. "Student Relativism." *Teaching Philosophy* 9 (3): 193-205.
- Searle, John. 1990. "Is the Brain's Mind a Computing Program?" *Scientific American* 262 (1): 26-31.
- Stebbing, L. Susan. 1939. "Slipping Away from the Point." Chapter 12 of *Thinking to Some Purpose*. Penguin Books, 1939.
- Telfer, Elizabeth. 2004. "'Animals Do It Too!': The Franklin Defense of Meat-Eating." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 1 (1): 51-68.
- Turing, Alan. 1950. The Turing Test. Selection from "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Mind* 59 (236): 433-460.

Required text for purchase

Weston, Anthony. 2017. *A Rulebook for Arguments*, fifth edition. Hackett Publishing 2017. (Not on Canvas.)

Video lectures available online

- Block, Trevor (TrevTutor). Video lecture on pragmatic implicature:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGJGIWqnSFY>
- Eggert, Randall. Video lecture on pragmatic implicature.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8gby28JgY8>