

PHI 2010: Intro to Philosophy (syllabus v0.7)

Fall 2025 / MW 12:50–1:40pm / LIT 0237

Instructor: Dr. Chuck Goldhaber
Office Hours: W 2:30–4:30pm

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Sections: #26074: F 10:40–11:30 (TUR 2322)
 #26075: F 12:50–1:40 (MAT 0010)
 #26076: F 1:55–2:45 (TUR 2353)

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.

Specific Course Description

This version of PHI 2010 introduces some of the fundamental questions of both historical and contemporary philosophy: Do we have free will? Is moral responsibility possible in a deterministic universe? What is virtue, and can it be taught? Are feelings such as anger ever appropriate? What is knowledge? Can we be certain of anything? While canvassing the breadth of answers philosophers have given to these questions, you will become familiar with common argument forms and learn to construct and defend your own positions on a variety of philosophical issues. The course will also give you the opportunity to think about what it means to live a happy and meaningful life.

Course Objectives

By the end of the term, you will be able to . . .

- read both historical and contemporary philosophical writing.
- succinctly reconstruct and critically evaluate abstract philosophical argument.
- thoughtfully engage with differing perspectives verbally and in writing.
- understand, articulate, defend, and challenge influential views on human nature, knowledge, freedom, and virtue.

General Education Fulfillment

This course is a 3.0-credit State Core Humanities course in the UF General Education program. It fulfills the GE Humanities (H) requirement. Accordingly, the course aims at cultivating the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture—in this case, philosophy. The course engages with major texts from the western canon. For more info on the subject area objectives, see: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>.

A minimum course grade of C is required for general education credit.

This course also fulfills the 4000-Words Writing Requirement (WR). In addition to a letter grade, students will receive a satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade indicating whether the student's written work demonstrates fluency and the use of writing as a tool to facilitate thinking. *To receive the WR credit, a student must earn both a letter grade of C or higher and a "Satisfactory" grade.*

UF General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Consistent with UF's Humanities' Student Learning Objectives, students will learn to:

- *Content*: Identify, describe, and explain classical Western philosophy's history, underlying theory, and methodologies;
- *Critical Thinking*: Identify and analyze the relevant factors that shape thought within philosophy, approaching issues and problems in philosophy from multiple perspectives;
- *Communication*: Share knowledge, thoughts, and reasoning clearly and effectively.

These learning objectives will be reached and evaluated through class discussion on philosophical texts and themes, rigorous essay writing, and exams on course contents.

State Core General Education Student Learning Outcomes

Consistent with the State Core GE Student Learning Objectives for PHI 2010:

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

(A) is assessed by exams; (B) by class discussion; and (C) by writing assignments.

Course Materials

All course materials, including readings, will be distributed as printouts in class or as digital files over Canvas. There is no materials or book expenses for this course.

For issues accessing Canvas, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537.

Course Requirements	% of grade
– Up to 40 pages per week of dense philosophical reading	
– Regular participation in class discussion	10%
– Six pop quizzes	10%
– A philosophical autobiography (600 words)	10%
– Three 4-page (1200 word) papers	each 15%
– Final exam	25%

Readings

All readings will be made available online on [Canvas](#). No need to purchase books.

In the schedule below, readings are listed next to the dates by which they must be read. All readings are dense and tough. Reading philosophy takes a lot of time, so make sure you budget plenty of it to read course readings carefully, ideally several times.

Participation

Attendance in lecture and section is mandatory (details below), but it alone will not secure you a good participation grade. Regular verbal participation in group discussions is required for that. This can take the form of asking a question, answering a question, sharing what you find interesting or strange about a text or topic, responding to a classmate, or reading a passage out loud. Over time, you will need to put forward, explain, and defend your own viewpoints on philosophical issues and your own readings of course texts. Doing so is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to the instructor or teaching assistant's office hours, and let's start talking there. Now is the time to confront any shyness and get comfortable taking part in the enjoyable, collaborative process of thinking together as a group.

Writing Standards and Resources

The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Evaluation of writing assignments will be responsive to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, organization, persuasiveness, and engagement with course texts/themes. Writing standards specific to philosophical writing will be gradually introduced and explained in class over the course of the term.

Students should refer to Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* for excellent writing guidance, including topics such as grammar, diction, and citations styles.

I encourage all students to take advantage of UF's Writing Studio (2215 Turlington Hall), which offers students help with all parts of the writing process. You can make an appointment with a writing consultant online, or come for a drop-in consultation 2–4pm most weekdays. For more information, see: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

A note on citations: 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 the [UF Libraries' guide on citations styles](#). Failure to use proper page citations can constitute plagiarism.

Students are strictly prohibited from using ChatGPT or any other LLMs or AI tools for any aspect of this course, including but not limited to writing assignments.

Philosophical Autobiography

The philosophical autobiography (2 pages, 450–600 words, due 9/5 by 9pm via Canvas) is a free form assignment in which you will reflect upon your past, present, and future interactions with philosophy. Write about what you think philosophy is, your experience with philosophy so far, what philosophical issues matter to you, and some aspects of your life story that led those issues to matter to you. Feel free to be creative here. But make sure to be concrete and specific, and try to locate and articulate a through-line. Rather than just listing topics of interest, explain *why* each interests you and how your interests might be connected to each other or to experiences you have had.

Papers

You must write three papers (4 pages, 1000–1200 words). Papers are due 10/10, 11/7, and 12/7 by 9pm, and should be submitted through Canvas. Each paper must address one of several provided topics concerning the course texts, unless you get your teaching assistant's written approval for your own topic at least one week before the paper deadline. Provided topics will be distributed by 9/18, 10/17, and 11/15.

All papers must be clear, concise, rigorous, and well argued. They must use quotes and page and/or paragraph number citations when presenting the philosophers' views or arguments. Each paper must evaluate these views and arguments through use of objections and replies. You can't just explain what the philosophers thinks. Your job is to use course readings as a springboard for articulating your own views, and to argue for them convincingly.

For the third paper, you will have the option to revise one of your first two papers, rather than writing a new one from scratch. Revising is a valuable skill, so we recommend this option. Revisions must be taken seriously; papers that are only minimally changed will receive a failing grade. Additionally, you must write a 1-page (up to 300 word) letter explaining how your revisions respond to comments on your initial submission.

Quizzes

Six pop quizzes will be given during the semester at unannounced times. Each quiz will test reading comprehension. Quizzes are closed note. You may not use computers, tablets, or phones during quizzes. You must bring a pen to class for taking quizzes.

Quizzes will often be at the beginning of class, so be sure to come on time. *Missed quizzes cannot be made up later.* But, as a courtesy, the lowest two grades of the six will be dropped. The remaining quizzes will each account for 2.5% of your course grade.

Final Exam

The final exam (12/11, 12:30–2:30pm in our normal classroom) includes true/false and essay questions. Essay questions will be graded according to accuracy, cogency, clarity, and persuasiveness. Possible essay questions will be provided in advance (by 11/3).

This will be a hand-written, closed book exam. You will *not* have access to any course materials or electronic devices during the exam. You must bring in your own pens and a blue books. These are available at the UF Bookstore.

Grading Policies

Numerical and letter grades use the following equivalences. We may boost borderline final grades for students who show consistent improvement and participation all term.

		87–89%	B+	77–79%	C+	67–69%	D+	<60	E
93–100%	A	83–86%	B	73–76%	C	63–66%	D		
90–92%	A–	80–82%	B–	70–72%	C–	60–62%	D–		

For more information, including GPA equivalents, see UF’s Grades and Grading Policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

All four writing assignments must be submitted to receive a “Satisfactory” for the WR.

Attendance and Late Policies

Course requirements for class attendance and make-up work are consistent with UF’s policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/> Students who are late to class should check in with an instructor immediately after class.

Late essays will drop a third of a letter grade per each 24 hours late (e.g., A– to B+). *As stated above, absolutely NO pop quizzes may be made up!*

We understand that extenuating circumstances may arise. If you need an extension for a valid (e.g., medical) reason, please reach out at least 48 hours before the deadline.

Accommodations

UF is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and provides equitable access to students with disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition—please contact the Disability Resource Center (in person in Reid Hall or online at <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>). It is never too late to request accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. All inquiries are handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations and want to use these accommodations in this course should share their accommodation letter with the instructors *as soon as possible*. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

Academic Integrity

You may not use ChatGPT or any other LLMs or AI tools for this course.

This course has a zero-tolerance policy for academic dishonesty. Any form of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, or use of AI tools, will result in a failing grade for the course. You are responsible for knowing what counts as academic dishonesty. Please consult UF's Student Honor Code: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>

To ensure a safe and constructive learning environment for all, please join me in the commitment to respect everyone's identities and rights, regardless of difference.

Classroom Prohibitions

While in class, you must disconnect laptops or tablets from the internet and other potential distractions for you or others.

Cell phones must be silenced for the duration of class. *Absolutely no cell phones may be used in the classroom, even before/after class.* Please put cell phones away and out of sight as soon as you enter the classroom. Let's make the classroom a space to 'disconnect' from external pressures, distractions, and noise—a rare privilege these days!

No eating or chewing gum is allowed in the classroom.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>.

Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their [Canvas](#) course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Schedule

— PART I: KNOWLEDGE —

Week 1 – Doubting everything

- M 8/25: Introduction. No reading.
- W 8/27: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1st Meditation (pp. 13–17)

Week 2 – What you cannot doubt

- M 9/1: Labor day. No class.
- W 9/3: Descartes, 2nd Meditation (pp. 17–24)

*** Philosophical autobiography due 9/5 by 9pm ***

Week 3 – How certain do you need to be?

- M 9/8: Jason Stanley, “Knowledge and Certainty” (pp. 35–57)
- W 9/10: G.E. Moore, “Proof of an External World” (pp. 147–70)

Week 4 – When can you say you know? It depends.

- M 9/15: David Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge” (pp. 549–54)
- W 9/17: David Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge” (pp. 554–67)

Week 5 – Can you even make sense of skeptical scenarios?

- M 9/22: Hilary Putnam, “Brains in a Vat” (pp. 1–14)
- W 9/24: Hilary Putnam, “Brains in a Vat” (pp. 14–21)

Week 6 – Seeing can be knowing

- M 9/29: John McDowell, “Knowledge and the Internal” (pp. 369–85)
- W 10/1: John McDowell, “Knowledge and the Internal” (pp. 385–94)

Week 7 – Could skepticism be good for something?

- M 10/6: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (12-page selections)
- W 10/8: Zhuangzi, Inner Ch. 2 (pp. 9–21)

*** First paper due 10/10 by 9pm ***

— PART II: FREEDOM —

Week 8 – Free will, the criminal justice system, and neuroscience

- M 10/13: Barbara Fried, “Beyond Blame” (pp. 1–15)
- W 10/15: Benjamin Libet, “Do We Have Free Will?” (pp. 47–57)

Week 9 – Is free will compatible with determinism?

- M 10/20: Roderick Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self” (pp. 5–15)
- W 10/22: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.1–2 (pp. 399–412)

Week 10 – You are both free and not free

- M 10/27: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, §3 (pp. 446–51)
- W 10/29: Hilary Bok, “Freedom and Practical Reason” (pp. 130–66)

Week 11 – What is responsibility?

- M 11/3: Angela Smith, “Responsibility as Answerability” (pp. 99–116)
- W 11/5: Angela Smith, “Responsibility as Answerability” (pp. 116–26)

*** Second paper due 11/7 by 9pm ***

— PART III: VIRTUE —

Week 12 – Characterizing virtue

- M 11/10: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Ch. 13; Book II (17 pages)
- W 11/12: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III, Chs. 6–12 (22 pages)

Week 13 – Anger as a vice and as a virtue

- M 11/17: Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance: Satyagraha* (15-page selections)
- W 11/19: Myisha Cherry, *The Case for Rage*, Ch. 1 (pp. 10–32)

*** Thanksgiving break, 11/23–30 ***

Week 14 – Anger and character

- M 12/1: Confucius, *Analects* (pp. 1–4); Kwong-loi Shun, “On Anger” (pp. 299–315)
- W 12/3: Confucius, *Analects* (reread); Kwong-loi Shun, “On Anger” (pp. 315–24)

*** Third paper due 12/7 by 9pm ***

*** Final exam 12/11, 12:30–2:30pm ***