Syllabus

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Office Hours: MWF 9:30-10:30 am.
Webcourses: webcourses2c.instructure.com/courses/1043800

Course Description

Philosophy courses explore different perspectives on deep and important questions. They also develop important skills, which are applicable in many areas of life. Through active participation in this course, you will improve your skills in:

- Understanding viewpoints different from your own
- Clearly explaining your views to others
- Assessing the reasons for holding your views
- Being convincing in defending your views

This course aims to develop these philosophical skills through critically reading, analyzing, discussing, and writing about classic and contemporary philosophical issues, questions and debates. During this course we will explore different approaches to questions such as:

- What is a good way to live one’s life? Is there a best way?
- What would a just society be like? Is it even possible?
- What can we know? What does it take to “know” something?
- What is a person? Could a non-human be one?

The aim of the course is not merely to learn about what philosophers have thought about questions like these, but to do philosophy using philosophers’ approaches to such questions as starting points.

By the end of this course, you should have your own answers to many of these questions, and should be able to explain your reasons for holding those views.

This course is an opportunity for you to think for yourselves, to examine and critically assess approaches to problems, and to defend ideas and positions of your own. The course, therefore, will require you to participate rather than simply take information in. You will read actively, and will be expected to reflect on what you read. You will also be given many opportunities to discuss with others, both verbally and in writing, your thoughts about the readings, questions and issues we cover.

Required Texts

i>clicker remote (you might try beginning with the free 14 day trial of the i>Clicker Go app; see http://www.iclicker.com).

Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader (VW)  

PHI 2010 Introduction to Philosophy

3 CR, Fall, 2014

Buying this book from the bookstore is kind of expensive. Other options include buying a cheaper version on-line, or renting a copy (from the bookstore, the publisher, or from the many book rental sites online (the day before classes start, Chegg has it for $28). You must have the 8th edition, though. You need it by Wednesday September 3.

Course Evaluation

- In-class i>clicker questions 15%
- Class attendance (by answers to clicker questions) 3%
- Webcourses discussion sessions 10%
- Leading and summarizing a Webcourses discussion 2%
- In-class discussions (best 5) preparation & participation 20%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final Exam 30%

Your week-one to-do list:

- Study this syllabus and bring any questions to class
- Take the syllabus quiz after you have read this syllabus, by Friday August 22nd. (You should still take it after then, for participation credit.)
- Buy the textbook and i>clicker, and bring both to class. You need the i>clicker for class on Wednesday August 20th.
- Register your clicker at http://www.iclicker.com/registration
- Read the readings listed on the course schedule BEFORE the class in which they will be discussed. For Wednesday, read VW §1 (pp.1-19), as well as the inside cover of our textbook (on Reading Philosophy). The course schedule has links for those who don’t have the text yet.
- Take the GEP pre-tests A, B, and C on Webcourses, in the course “GEP PHI2010 14Fall” (or from http://bit.ly/1oT2fOe)

A note about assigned readings

This course, like most philosophy courses, will involve a considerable amount of reading. Many of the assigned readings and exercises based on them ask you to think, write and talk about several authors’ positions on important questions and issues, to encourage you to answer the questions for yourself.

So if you are committed to passing this course, you should be prepared to read and study for about two hours or more for each class session.

Lectures will introduce and explain some of the basic points of assigned readings. But these will make much more sense if the lecture is explaining and elaborating on material you have already
read and tried to make your own sense of, rather than introducing you to it for the first time. Thus by reading the assigned chapters before class, you will get more from the lecture and discussion, ask more penetrating questions, and will have a better chance of a higher grade. While you read, make notes. Highlight— even better, underline— the crucial passages. Make notes in the margin or ideally in a notebook. Try to answer the textbook's reading questions and critical questions (presented before and after readings). If there are any questions you cannot answer, read the relevant sections again. If you still do not understand, or if you do understand and they raise further questions (and I hope they do!), please ask questions about them in class. Try answering the questions again after class and make sure you can answer them all by then.

Use and registration of i>clickers
You will need to purchase (or borrow) an i>clicker, i>clicker2 or i>Clicker+, or fgo to iclickergo.com to use their web access and/or to download the i>Clicker Go app for your phone (14 day free trial), and register it (see below) for use in this course. The i>clicker is a remote control style device that allows you to respond to questions I pose during class.
I use the i>clicker to encourage active participation in the class, to review previous material and assess preparation for class, for critical thinking during class sessions, and to promote discussion and collaborative learning. I will frequently poll the class about various aspects of the class topics, questions and issues, often to initiate small group discussion. Sometimes the questions will be quiz questions that count for credit.
In order to receive this credit, you will need to bring your i>clicker remote to class by Wednesday August 20th (if you don’t have one yet, you can try the free 14 day trial of the i>clicker GO app for your phone). In order to fully complete the registration properly you must both:
- **Bring your i>clicker to class and vote** on at least one question (so your i>clicker becomes associated with this course).
- **Register your i>clicker on-line** (so your i>clicker is associated with you) http://www.iclicker.com/regisration. Complete the fields with your first name, last name, student ID, and remote ID. Your student ID should be your UCF NID. The remote ID is the series of numbers and letters found on the bottom of the back of your i>clicker remote.
You can do these in any order. If you bring the clicker to class before you register it, your clicker’s responses will be recorded. But they will not be associated with you until you register it online.

The clicker will be used every day in class. You are responsible for bringing your i>clicker daily.
Important: it is a serious offense against the university code of student conduct to bring another student’s i>clicker to class and use it for them. This is equivalent to impersonating another student and helping them cheat on a test. This is also a violation of academic integrity, and will be treated as such. In such cases both the person impersonating another and the person impersonated will be penalized according to the plagiarism and cheating policy described below.

Special instructions for i>clicker GO
To create a i>clicker GO account, visit https://iclickergo.com or download the app for iOS or Android. Creating an account automatically starts a free 14-day trial subscription.
Please use this trial period to make sure i>clicker GO will work for all of your i>clicker classes before purchasing a subscription, as it is not possible to receive a refund after you purchase a subscription. Once you create your i>clicker GO account, you do not need to do anything else to register. Just be sure that your account has the following profile information:
- Student ID: Your UCF NID
- School ZIP/Postal Code: 32816
- School Name: University of Central Florida
When you log into the App, you will see a list of instructors at UCF. Select Cash, Mason, and Introduction to Philosophy PHI2010-0001.
At the end of your trial, should you decide to purchase i>clicker GO, you can purchase access to i>clicker GO in a variety of subscription lengths using your credit card online or through in-app purchase with your smartphone; this subscription includes an unlimited number of courses.
Important: not all UCF classes that use i>clicker will permit using this i>clicker Go app (many buildings do not have the WiFi bandwidth to support its use).

Class attendance and participation
You are expected to attend all classes. Bring your i>clicker to each class. It will be used in every class to record your participation in polls and quizzes. You will be recorded as having attended if you answer any polls or quiz questions.
Your attendance grade will be calculated by totaling the portion of the classes you attended, ignoring up to three absences (to allow for illness and other important absences). Absences of more than three classes will negatively affect your participation grade. Only documented excuses that explain more than two absences will be accepted. No other explanations are expected.
In-class pop quizzes
Clickers will also be used for in-class quiz questions during most class sessions. Quizzes will test class preparation by asking basic questions about the assigned readings, review questions regarding previous classes and comprehension questions about that day’s class.

In Class Discussion Sessions
A worksheet will be posted on the web-site approximately a week before the discussion session. It may include links to relevant web-site(s) and questions about the issues they raise.
**Before class:** submit to the WebCourses assignment a copy of the discussion worksheet, completed with your own informed thoughtful answers to the questions. Bring a copy to class, too. You will use this to help you contribute to your small group discussions.
Up to 2 points per session will be based on preparation (completed worksheets submitted to webcourses before class; graded for evidence that you have read the relevant material and thought about the issues involved.)
**In Class:** Bring with you to the discussion session a printed completed worksheet, with your own answers to the questions. These answers will be the basis for small group discussions.
Up to 2 points for participation in the discussion (using your clicker to respond to surveys).
The point is that a lot of useful learning can happen during informed participation in discussions. Neither alone is sufficient.
You are expected to participate in all discussions (think of them as small, fun, midterms). Absences will be excused only for documented exceptional circumstances (ideally, arranged in advance). In such cases, the worksheet must still be completed carefully. Other absences cannot earn discussion participation credit.
However, we will be doing this at least six times through the semester. Your best five will count towards your final grade.
The worksheet must be completed BEFORE the class session.

WebCourses Discussions
You will be randomly assigned to a discussion group, in which you will participate in weekly discussions on WebCourses with other students. Only members of the group will have access to your postings.
These groups will discuss assigned questions each week. The purpose of these discussions is to explore the questions in the context of assigned readings and lectures.
You will be required to:
- reply thoughtfully to any responses to your postings.
Your collaboration grade for these discussions will be based in part on peer-evaluation (by you and other group members) of your contributions to the group’s process and products.

**Discussion group report**
Each week one (or two) group member(s) will take a turn as leader for the week’s discussion and will write a brief report on the discussion for the rest of the class.
By the end of week one, each member will have signed up to lead the discussion and report on the results for a particular week. Each member will take a turn leading the discussion. (You can lead for more than one week if you wish, as long as everyone gets a turn once.)

**Sometimes there may need to be TWO discussion leaders.** How often this happens will depend on the size of the group; everyone should get a turn at least once. In such cases, the two group members can either work independently or coordinate to summarize different aspects of the discussion (e.g. A will summarize the reasons for a position most of the group agrees on and B will summarize the case against that position). It is the leaders’ responsibility to ask questions, make suggestions, identify problems and so on, so that they are able to fully articulate the positions people express as well as the reasons people have expressed for holding them. (E.g. if you cannot identify the reasons someone has for holding the position they do, then ask them about those reasons.)

**Each leader’s report** to the rest of the class will be about 500 words (being excessively longer or shorter than this may incur penalties).
Your grade (2% of course grade) will be based on clearly reporting the most important aspects of your group’s discussion, the conclusions many of you agree about and the reasons for concluding that, the parts some may disagree about and the reasons for that dissent. A draft of your report(s) should be first posted for the rest of the group by the Sunday at 5:00 pm (allowing time for corrections and suggestions from the rest of the group).
The final version should be posted to the SUMMARIES discussion forum by 5:00 pm on the Tuesday following the week’s discussions. Late penalties of 1 point deduction will apply at 5:00 pm. Reports posted after midnight will incur a 2 point deduction. Reports posted after 9:00 am Wednesday will incur a 3 point deduction.

**Midterm and Final Examinations**
Exam questions will be based on lectures, discussions and on readings. Anything that I or anybody else says in class is potentially examinable.
Grading & Evaluation

Your work for the course will total a score out of 100. I use this to determine a letter grade. I think a rigid set of cutoff points for grades is unfair because this would mean that people with very similar score get different grades (it would be unfair for a student who earns with 79.75 should not necessarily get a C+, while another student with 80.0 earns a B-).

I think it is better for you to earn a fair grade, even if this means that your final grade is not completely predictable grade. You should have a sense of the approximate grade your performance so far would earn, and should just do you best to improve our grade in whatever assignments or exams remain.

So I try to make principled distinctions between groups of students, rather than using arbitrary cutoffs. Borderline cases are decided using (in order): exam scores, quiz scores, discussion participation, class participation. 

VERY ROUGHLY, the following are the approximate bounds of the ranges at which I often award grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>0-49</th>
<th>50-65</th>
<th>65-79</th>
<th>80-89</th>
<th>90+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IMPORTANT: Final grades may not necessarily precisely follow the above approximate boundaries; they may vary by +/- 3 points or so. If, for example, you end up with 78.5, this does not necessarily mean that you were 0.5 points from earning a B-. The cutoff for B- might be as high as 83 or so in some semesters.

You should be able to earn a B (+/-) grade for this course. You can do this by:

• coming to class most of the time, with your clicker
• always participating in all classes, with your clicker
• actively participating in all classes, with your clicker
• doing all of the assigned readings, and taking detailed notes about the positions argued for and each author’s reasons for holding that position
• taking notes to help you remember and think about the class content
• comparing and contrasting the positions argued for and each author’s reasons for holding that position
• doing all of the assigned readings, and taking detailed notes about the positions argued for and each author’s reasons for holding that position
• regular writing out your answers to the textbook’s reading questions and critical questions
• using the textbook site’s resources to review each chapter as we finish that section of the course, as well as for reviewing at the end of the course
• always contributing to your group’s in-class discussions of the topic at hand, asking questions of others, engaging with others in a deep examination of the topic or question at hand.
• thinking about the issues we discuss, relating them to examples from your own life, and talking about them with friends and relations
• coming to office hours to discuss with the professor any small problems you have about the course, before they turn into big problems

You can increase your chance of earning a C (+/-) grade for this course by:

• avoiding coming to class on days when you don’t feel like coming and sometimes forgetting your clicker when you do come to class
• resisting the urge to take notes to help you remember the lectures
• resisting the inclination to read the assigned readings (in spite of your curiosity about them), and not taking notes to help you remember the main points when you do read them
• avoiding reading or thinking about the textbook’s reading questions and critical questions
• not coming to office hours to discuss with the professor any small problems you have about the course; wait until they turn into big problems.

To Earn a D (+/-), do some or all of the following:

• Do even more of the things described above for earning a C.

To earn an F, do some or all of the following:

• Never come to class.
• Never do the readings
• Never complete any assignments
• Never contribute to group discussions
• Never discussing with the professor any small problems you have about the course. Let them turn into big problems, but still don’t
discuss them with the professor. Wait until they become complete fiascos. Be at the stage of wishing you had a time machine before you decide to talk to the professor.

Course Policies:

Class attendance
You are expected to attend all classes. Absence of more than three classes can adversely affect your grade. Class attendance will be recorded by clicker question participation. Absences for more than three classes will be accommodated only for documentable exceptional circumstances (medical or family emergencies, representing UCF on a sports team, religious holy day, etc.). You only need to contact me for such documentable absences. If you anticipate an absence, let me know beforehand.

Extensions and Late Penalties
Extensions will be granted only for documentable exceptional circumstances (medical or family emergencies). Ask for the extension as soon as you are aware of the problem, not on the due date. Anticipated absences are not reasons for extensions (submit it before you leave).

Late assignments will be deducted 5% of their potential value per day late (so an assignment worth a maximum of 10 points loses 1/2 a point a day; four days late its score will be deducted 2 marks. Weekend days count fully.

However, if you feel that your circumstances warrant consideration as an exception, discuss this with me as early as possible.

Plagiarism & Cheating
UCF faculty support the UCF Creed. Integrity - practicing and defending academic and personal honesty - is the first tenet of the UCF Creed. This is in part a reflection of the second tenet, Scholarship: I will cherish and honor learning as a fundamental purpose of membership in the UCF community.

Course assignments and tests are designed to have educational value; the process of preparing for and completing these exercises will help improve your skills and knowledge. Material presented to satisfy course requirements is therefore expected to be the result of your own original scholarly efforts.

UCF’s Golden Rule defines plagiarism as follows: “whereby another’s work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student’s own.” Cheating is using unauthorized material, or giving or accepting unauthorized help on assignments or tests. These contradict the educational value of course assignments and quizzes. Students who attempt to obtain unearned academic credentials that do not reflect their skills and knowledge can also undermine the value of the UCF degrees earned by their more honest peers.

I have a responsibility for your education and the value of a UCF degree, and so have a responsibility to discourage and prevent unethical behavior, and to respond to infringements of academic integrity when necessary. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense.

The typical penalty for plagiarism or cheating in this course will be a loss of credit for the assignment AND a deduction of one grade for the course (e.g. a B+ becomes a B), which may result in a failing grade in the course. (So you would do better to do a bad job honestly than to cheat and get caught.) Perpetrators may also be required to take an academic integrity seminar. Serious cases can lead to academic probation, suspension, expulsion from the University, or the revocation of a degree. http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/ has more about UCF's Rules of Conduct.

I use www.TurnItIn.com and other methods to make it difficult to plagiarize or cheat and relatively easy to detect attempts to do so. I hope you will consider it not worth the risk, and can appreciate that doing the assignments honestly is part of the educational experience that you came to university to have. Copies of papers may be retained by Turnitin.

NOTE: use of another person’s “clicker” in an attempt to help them earn credit in classes they miss, is considered impersonating another student, and helping them cheat on a test. This is also a violation of academic integrity, and will be treated as such. In such cases both the person impersonating another and the person impersonated will be penalized according to the above policy.

Classroom Behavior

Accessibility and Classroom Accommodations
The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has discussed appropriate accommodations with the professor. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.