

# **Introduction to Philosophy**

## **Syllabus**

### **Spring 2017**

#### **Instructor Contact**

- Instructor: William Butchard, Ph.D.
- Office: PSY 235
- Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30
- E-mail: Please contact me through the course messaging system. If you cannot contact me in the way on a given day, my regular email address is William.Butchard@ucf.edu

#### **Course Information**

- Course Name: Introduction to Philosophy
- Course ID: PHI 2010
- Credit Hours:3
- Semester/Year: Spring 2017
- Location and Meeting Times: 108 Psychology Building

#### **Course Description**

What is philosophy? It is similar to science in that each is a rational pursuit of truth. But philosophy differs from science in two crucial ways. First, it addresses different questions. While scientists ask, for example, what the various causes of cancer are, philosophers ask what it is, in the first place, for one thing to cause another. While scientists seek to discover the fundamental building blocks of matter, philosophers seek to discover what it is, in the first place, for something to be material (as opposed, say, to being psychological). Philosophers, in brief, ask questions about the notions that are fundamental to our conception of ourselves and of the world. The second way in which philosophy differs from science is that scientists answer the questions they ask by means of the scientific method. This involves making observations, forming hypotheses, and testing those hypotheses through further observation. Philosophers, on the other, reflect on the very foundations of science and common sense. It is this “armchair” approach that makes some believe it to be impossible for one philosophical position to be more reasonable than another because it is all “just semantics”. I hope the course will persuade you that philosophy does address matters of substance and that it is possible to make genuine philosophical progress.

We will explore a number of traditional philosophical issues concerning the nature of knowledge, free will, consciousness, morality, and God. This is not a course in which you are expected simply to memorize and regurgitate information. The course is mainly about ideas, and our aim will be to think carefully and critically about the topics mentioned and, more generally, to develop a framework for thinking about the arc, pursuits, and priorities of the rest of our lives. We will question our preconceptions vigorously and work together to establish a communal atmosphere that will make the course both challenging and fun.

Ultimately, it is up to you to decide whether studying philosophy is truly valuable. In my view, it is—and I am very excited to be working with you this semester.

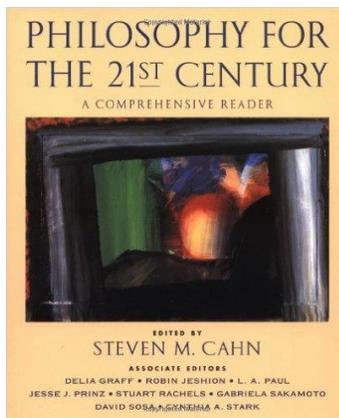
## Course Objectives

A major aim of this course is for you to develop your ability to read, write, and think. If you are successful in the course, you will see improvement with respect to the following skills:

- Comprehending complex written material
- Putting difficult material in your own words clearly and succinctly
- Evaluating philosophical arguments
- Advancing good philosophical arguments yourself

## Required Texts

Steven M. Cahn, ed. *Philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Oxford University Press (2003). ISBN-10: 0195147928



I will make supplemental readings available in Canvas

## Course Requirements

- 6 exams--5 regular exams and one cumulative final exam. Each exam consists of 30 questions. The questions are true false and multiple-choice.
- Online quizzes

## Missed Assignments/Make-Ups

Missing a deadline is not something that can be taken lightly because of fairness and assignment security. **You should consider it very unlikely that you will be able to make up a missed assignment.** I can allow such make-up work only if your circumstances are truly extraordinary and you provide proper documentation in a reasonable amount of time. Excusable failures to meet deadlines include documented medical emergencies, deaths in the family, and some

university sponsored activities. Telling me that you were sick or having a roommate write a note will not count as documentation. A conflict with prior travel plans, etc. or other personal commitments does not constitute an excuse.

**Please note that you may not take an exam after someone completes the exam and leaves the room and may not make it up.**

## **Grade Determination**

There are 100 possible percentage points for the course. This percentage will be displayed in the course grade book throughout semester as you complete the assignments. The grade scale is as follows:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>
A	90 – 100%
B+	87 – 89%
B	80 – 86%
C+	77 – 79%
C	70 – 76%
D+	67 – 69%
D	60 – 66%
F	59% and below

Each category of assignment is worth a percentage of your final grade:

percentage of your final grade:

<b>Assignment Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Grade</b>
Online Quizzes	20%
In-Class Exams	80%

The Online quizzes can be found under "Modules". You will have unlimited attempts. Once a quiz opens, it will remain open until the end of the semester. The quizzes are designed to test your understanding of the lecture notes. Those also can be found under "Modules".

Your lowest exam score will be dropped. The final exam score can be your drop. Please note that if you skip the final exam with the intention of having that score dropped, it will be dropped, but (of course) a regular exam that was your drop before the final will be counted after the final. In other words, the number of points you have before the final does not tell you what you will have after skipping the final.

## **Attendance and Participation**

I strongly encourage you to be a full participant in class discussions. Don't worry about getting something wrong. If something we are discussing is unclear to you, chances are a lot of other people are confused by the same thing, and your input may well help us focus in on the difficulty. Voicing your opinion, putting an idea on the table for examination, or just asking a question can be very helpful in a class discussion.

Remember that there are several other students in the course and that it is important not to distract them. Please make an effort not to interrupt class by arriving late, talking while someone else has the floor, or using your laptop for something other than taking notes. Also, please keep your cell phones off and away during lecture.

Class attendance should be viewed as a responsibility. I will take attendance every class period, and I consider attendance mandatory, but it will not affect your grade directly. In other words, you will not earn an attendance score. If you come to class, you will get a much better handle on the readings and the issues we discuss. Also, when you miss class on a day when there is an exam, you miss the exam, which will hurt your grade.

Finally, always remember to be civil towards people who have different beliefs from yours.

## **Course Scheduling**

The exam dates are schedule for the following dates:

- Exam 1: Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup>
- Exam 2: Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>
- Exam 3: Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup>
- Exam 4: Tuesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>
- Exam 5: Thursday, April 20<sup>th</sup>
- Final: Thursday, April 27

Exam dates are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Every student is bound by the exam dates. A study guide will be posted for each exam as it approaches (under Files). If an exam date has been changed, the new date will be identified on the study guide. It is the responsibility of the student to check the study guides for exam dates.

## **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the [Office of Student Conduct](#) for further action. See the [UCF Golden Rule](#) for further information. I will assume for this course

that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat by giving answers to others or taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

Plagiarism includes copying and submitting as your own a passage from a text, the work of a fellow student; handing in a paper prepared by another as your own; using sources for writing your paper and not citing them in the paper. Plagiarism does cover materials found on web-sites. Note that it is possible to plagiarize even if you cite your sources, if, e.g., the wording is too close to the cited text.

If, in writing a paper, you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism or how to avoid plagiarism, please discuss the paper with me before turning it in.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

This class is an educational safe zone. It welcomes and respects the viewpoints of students of all sexual orientations and gender identities as well as all races, ethnicities, religions and abilities. All members of the learning community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity.

## **Students with Disabilities**

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 met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with [Student Disability Services](#), Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

## **Important Notice for Financial Aid Recipients**

As of Fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete the academic activity below. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Activity: Complete the Syllabus Quiz.

## **Copyright**

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these

items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

## **Third-Party Software and FERPA**

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

## **Topics and Readings**

Our pace will depend to some extent on how quickly you grasp the material. As a result, it is not easy to predict when a given reading will be assigned. Therefore, the readings will be assigned as we go, and we may not get to every selection listed. Some of the selections are not in your textbook and will be available in Webcourses. Those are marked below with an (e).

### *1. Knowledge and Skepticism*

- Miranda Fricker: Epistemic Injustice and the Role of Virtue in the Politics of Knowing (e)
- G.E. Moore: Proof of an External world
- David Lewis: Elusive knowledge
- Jonathan Vogel: Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the best explanation (e)

### *2. Free Will*

- Harry Frankfurt: Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility
- A.J. Ayer: Freedom and Necessity
- Roderick M. Chisholm: Human Freedom and the Self

### *3. Ethics and Justice*

- John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism
- Immanuel Kant: Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals
- Cornel West: On Affirmative Action
- Peter Singer: All Animals are Equal

### *4. The Existence of God*

- Saint Anselm: The Ontological Argument
- Gaunilo: On Behalf of the Fool

- J.L. Mackie: Critique of the Cosmological Argument
- William Paley: The Argument from Design

#### *5. Mind and Matter*

- John Searle: Can Computers Think?
- Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia
- Paul Churchland: Jackson's Knowledge Argument
- Daniel Dennett: Consciousness Explained