

## Syllabus

# PHI 2010 Introduction to Philosophy

3 CR, Fall, 2017

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**Office:** PSY 246

**Office Hours:** M 2:30-4:30 pm.

**Web:** [bit.ly/MasonCash](http://bit.ly/MasonCash)

W 2:30-3:30 pm.

**Classroom:** CB1: 121

**Webcourses:** <https://webcourses.ucf.edu/courses/1265763>

## 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 are you? a mind? a body? a human being? a person?
- What is a person? Could a non-human be one?
- What could change about you, without changing who you are?

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 yourself, 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

*The World of Philosophy* (WP) Steven M. Cahn (Oxford University Press).

You need the textbook by **Wednesday September 1**. Get it at the UCF bookstore, or rent it or buy it from many other online sellers (if you get it elsewhere, make sure it is delivered before Wednesday Sept 1).

i>clicker remote or iClicker REEF polling app (you might try beginning with the REEF polling free 14 day trial; see <https://www.iclicker.com/students>).

## Course Evaluation

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|---|-----|
| • In-class i>clicker questions                              | 20% |
| • Class attendance & participation                          | 5%  |
| • Webcourses discussion participation                       | 10% |
| • Webcourses Discussion group report                        | 5%  |
| • In-class discussions (best 5) preparation & participation | 20% |
| • Two in-class quizzes                                      | 20% |
| • Final Exam  | 20% |

## 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 25<sup>th</sup>**. (Take it before then for participation credit. You should still take it after then for Student Financial Aid Academic Engagement recording purposes.)
- Buy the textbook.
- Read the readings listed on the course schedule BEFORE the class in which they will be discussed. For Wednesday, read Beardsley and Beardsley: "What is Philosophy?" and Bertrand Russell: "The Value of Philosophy". The course schedule has links to pdfs for those who don't have the textbook yet.
- Either get an i>clicker or download the REEF polling app (14 day free trial). You need the i>clicker or REEF polling app for class on **Friday August 25<sup>th</sup>**.
- Register your clicker on Webcourses (see below)
- Begin the first on-line discussion on the purpose of education.
- Sign up to lead and report on one on-line discussion session this semester.
- Take the GEP pre-tests A, B, and C on Webcourses, linked from our Webcourses section, before Sept 1.

## 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 earning 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 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 and REEF polling

I will be using iClickers in class this semester (i>clicker2 or i>Clicker+, or the i>clicker REEF Polling app on your phone). I use iClicker to encourage active participation in the class, to review previous material and assess preparation for class, to help me understand what you know and what you think about issues we discuss, and to promote critical thinking during class sessions, 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-type questions (testing your preparation for class) that count for credit.

You will earn one extra participation credit if you register your clicker or REEF Polling app and use it in class by **Friday August 25<sup>th</sup>** (if you don't have a clicker yet, you can use the free 14 day trial of the REEF polling app for your phone). In order to fully complete the registration properly you must:

- **Buy (or borrow) an iClicker or sign up for an i>clicker account.** A new iClicker comes with a free 6 month account. Anyone can have a free 14 day trial of the i>clicker app or web-access from <https://www.iclicker.com/students/apps-and-remotes/apps>.



- **If you have a clicker:** register it on webcourses by clicking on the “i>Clicker” tab, and add your Clicker ID (. This enables me to know who owns that clicker and to synchronize your votes and scores with webcourses.)

Do not register your clicker on iclicker.com: if you do, I will not be able to match your responses with your name and you will not receive credit.

- **If you use the i>Clicker app:** log into your account and associate it with the course. Go to [app.reef-education.com](http://app.reef-education.com) to download the app and to register your account.
- **Bring your clicker or phone with REEF polling app to class and vote on at least one question.**

You can do these in any order. If you vote in class before you register, your responses will be recorded. But they will not be associated with you until you register your account on webcourses.

Clickers will be used every day in class. You are responsible for bringing your clicker or app daily.

**Do not use Both the Clicker and the i>clicker app in the same class session.** This could result in some of your answers not being counted.

**Important: it is a serious offense against the university code of student conduct to submit votes for a fellow student.** 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 REEF Polling App.

Go to <https://www.iclicker.com/students/apps-and-remotes/apps> to download the I>Clicker app for your device and to sign up for an i>clicker account. **You must use your university email address and your NID in the Student ID field.** If you need to change your email address, password, or student ID, edit your account profile. Do not create and use more than one REEF Polling account, as you will only receive credit from a single account.

Unless you will exclusively be using an i>clicker remote, you will need to purchase a subscription to use i>Clicker REEF Polling. You can use a credit card to purchase online, or an in-app purchase. Creating a i>Clicker REEF Polling account automatically starts a free 14-day trial subscription.

Please use this trial period to make sure i>Clicker REEF polling 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. Important: not all UCF classes that use i>clicker will permit using the REEF polling app (many buildings do not have yet the

WiFi bandwidth to support its use). If you must use an i>clicker in another class, then it might be best to just use that here, too.

At the end of your trial, should you decide to purchase i>Clicker REEF polling subscription, you can purchase access in a variety of subscription lengths using your credit card online or through in-app purchase with your smartphone, or by buying an activation code from the UCF Bookstore. Each subscription will enable you to use it in an unlimited number of courses.

## Class attendance and participation

You are expected to attend all classes. Bring your clicker or REEF app 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 while in class.

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 and surveys

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. Surveys will ask your opinions about issues and questions we discuss.

At the end of the semester, the total for in-class clicker questions will be adjusted to allow for three possible absences from class. For instance, if you scored 84/100, with an average of 4 points possible per class, then I would adjust the total to be out of 88 (3x4 points) so your final score would become be 85/88.

## 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, *explaining your reasons for your answers*.

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 completed worksheet, with your own answers to the questions. (This can be printed or on your laptop, or tablet (the small screen of your phone is not recommended). 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, exams). 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. so missing one will not count against your grade.

The worksheet must be completed BEFORE the class session. Not during or after.

## 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.

for each discussion, you will be required to:

- Post 100-300 words on your own considered thoughts on the week's question (your position and your reasons for holding that position)
- respond (50+ words) to the posting of at least one other group members (add examples, ask questions, raise reasons for disagreement, etc).
- reply thoughtfully to any responses to your postings.

Your collaboration grade for these discussions will be based on your contributions to the group's process and products.

## Discussion group report

Each week one group member will take a turn as leaders for the week's discussion and will each write a brief reports 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 session.

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.)

The leader's report to the rest of the class will be about **500 words** (being excessively longer or shorter than this may incur penalties). This will be posted to a separate discussion topic for Group leaders only.

Your grade (5% 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.

Your Report should be posted to the relevant Summary discussion thread by **5:00 pm on due date** (usually the day following the week's discussions, the day before we'll discuss the issue again in class). Late penalties of 1 point deduction will apply at 5:00 pm. Reports posted after 9:30am the following day will incur a 2 point deduction (out of five). Reports cannot earn better than 3 points (/5) after this time.

### Quizzes 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 79.99 was awarded 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. 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.

<b>Score</b>	0-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90+
<b>Grade:</b>	F	D- D D+	C- C C+	B- B B+	A- A

**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/REEF polling app
- taking notes to help you remember the lectures
- doing most of the assigned readings, and often taking notes about the authors' arguments while you read
- occasionally thinking about the textbook's reading questions and critical questions; sometimes writing down your answers
- using the textbook site's resources to review each chapter
- putting some thought into your preparation for the in-class discussions, and regularly contributing to your group's discussions of the topic at hand.
- thinking about the topics of on-line discussions, and usually contributing to discussion of the topic at hand.
- 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 an A in this course by:**

- actively participating in all classes, with your clicker/REEF polling app
- always taking notes to help you remember and think about the class content
- doing all of the assigned readings, and taking detailed notes about the positions argued for and each author's reasons for holding that position
- regularly writing out your answers to the textbook's reading questions and critical questions
- using the textbook site's resources to review each chapter, as well as for reviewing at the end of the course
- always preparing thoroughly for the in-class discussions of the topic at hand, asking questions of others, engaging with others in a deep and thoughtful examination of the topic or question at hand.
- thinking carefully and rigorously about the topics of on-line discussions, and actively contributing to discussion of the topic at hand, asking questions of others, engaging with others in a deep and thoughtful examination of the topic or question.
- 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/REEF polling app 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
- putting little thought or effort into your preparation for the in-class discussions, and rarely contributing to your group's discussions of the topic at hand.
- 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

No late assignments will be accepted. The principal assignments are preparations for in-class discussions. Preparing for discussions after they have happened is preparing too late.

### 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 complete grade level for the course (e.g. a B+ becomes a C+), 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.)

Grades changed for reasons of academic dishonesty and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see <http://z.ucf.edu/>.

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](http://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 or REEF polling account 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**

Your responsibilities as a student of UCF are outlined in The Golden Rule. <http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

#### **Accessibility and Classroom Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must be registered with Student Accessibility Services [sas.sdes.ucf.edu](http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu) and must file an Accommodations Letter Request with SAS. SAS will collaborate with the student and the professor to arrange needed accommodations.