

Philosophy 2010: Introduction to Philosophy

University of Central Florida
Fall Semester 2018

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Course Sessions: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30-11:45am, Harris Engineering Center 118

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 6:15-7:15pm, and Thursdays, 12-1pm, or by appointment. (For instructions on making an appointment, see section 6 under “Course Policies.”)

Course Catalogue Description

Inquiry into the meaning and justification of fundamental ideas and beliefs concerning reality, knowledge, and values; application to relevant topics in ethics, religion, and politics.

Enriched Description

You might not know what philosophy is, especially since the word “philosophy” is thrown around to mean so many different things. You might just think of it as “a bunch of theory,” or even “one’s own beliefs or opinions about things nobody can prove.” Although it is fine for people to use the word to mean those things, none of those things are what philosophy, the academic discipline, happens to be. But it is easy to see how people could use the word so variously—it is a bit difficult to get a grasp on what philosophy actually *is*. So, what is it?

Immanuel Kant, one of history’s greatest philosophers, came up with compelling answers to a great many questions, including that one. He said that philosophy is itself the attempt to answer three (very fundamental) questions.

- 1) What can we know?
- 2) What ought we do?
- 3) What may we hope for?

Although philosophy asks more questions than just these, all its interests are intimately connected to the things these questions are asking about. Philosophy brings to bear our best judgments and the tools of logic and rigorous argumentation to devise answers. You will read some famous texts from some of the greatest philosophers in history, but you will also get a flavor for what contemporary philosophers are thinking.

The first question points to a number of issues that *theoretical* philosophy asks about. People claim to know things about the world all the time. So they claim to have knowledge, and they claim that what they know is how things are. They also take it for granted that people are the kinds of things that can have this knowledge. People certainly could not know anything if they weren’t able to think about the things they know about. Theoretical philosophy investigates each of these issues that are implicated in the investigation of what knowing is.

The second question is the primary question of *practical* philosophy. We all have opinions about what the right thing to do is. But it’s often controversial *what* the right thing to do is in many

controversial cases (abortion, affirmative action, situations where one must decide whether to sacrifice one's own well-being for that of others, and many others). And it isn't immediately clear *why* something is the right thing to do. Some things seem right because they lead to the greatest benefit for everyone involved, or wrong because they cause harm; other things seem right or wrong just because those actions are right or wrong, whatever else the actions lead to. Practical philosophy uses the same tools and tries to turn our opinions into systematic theories about what is right and wrong that we can use to figure out how to lead good, moral lives. Our exploration of the second question will address both (a) what makes actions in general right and wrong and (b) applications of these theories to concrete, controversial cases that will show how this generality can guide our specific choices.

The final question is something many subfields of philosophy try to answer. Virtually everyone thinks just governments are desirable; countless people have even given their lives in the pursuit of justice. The nature of justice is one of the earliest, most profound questions of the philosophical tradition. Religion brings many hope, and makes an eternal reward for good behavior and suffering on Earth more plausible. Since the existence of a divine being or an afterlife is not something anyone can directly observe, it has to be inferred from the way things are in other ways, and very basic, general facts about the universe – such as those philosophy investigates – bear quite a bit on those inferences. Hence the philosophy of religion has much to say on these topics. We will be looking into some of the most famous arguments for and against the existence of a divine being and the immortality of the soul.

As this brief introduction to the course material (hopefully) reveals, you will be in for a very interesting, enlightening initiation.

Course Format

Lecture, discussion, and writing assessment

Course Policies

1) *Academic Conduct Policy*. All members of the academic community at UCF are expected to practice and uphold standards of academic integrity and honesty. “Academic integrity” means representing oneself and one's work honestly. Misrepresentation is cheating, since it involves claiming credit for ideas and work not actually one's own and thus trying to attain a certain academic evaluation without actually earning it. Here are some examples of academic dishonesty:

a) Plagiarizing the work of others. 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.” Whether students have read or heard the information used, they must document the source of the information. When dealing with written sources, a clear distinction should be made between quotations (which reproduce the information word-for-word within quotation marks) and paraphrases (which digest the source of information and provide it in the student's own words). Both direct quotations and paraphrases must be documented. Even if students rephrase, condense, or select from another person's work, the ideas are still the other person's, and failure to give credit constitutes misrepresentation of the student's actual work and plagiarism of another's ideas. Buying a paper or taking information from the internet without attribution and handing it in as one's own work is, in fact, plagiarism.

b) Falsifying records or providing misinformation regarding one's credentials.

c) Unauthorized collaboration on computer assignments and unauthorized access to and use of computer programs, including modifying computer files created by others and representing that work as one's own.

2) *Completion of Required Work.* Completion of all required work is necessary in order to pass the course. (See "Assignments" below.)

3) *Excused Absences.* Attendance and participation directly determine a portion of the grade in this course. Students are obligated to inform their instructors of dates they will miss class due to an excused absence prior to those anticipated dates. For activities such as athletic competitions whose schedules are known prior to the start of a term, students must provide their instructors during the first week of each term a written schedule showing days they expect to miss class. For other university excused absences, students must provide each instructor at the earliest possible time the dates they will miss. To do this, please message me on Webcourses at the earliest convenient opportunity, including the necessary documentation.

4) *Deadline Extensions.* Things come up, and none of us are totally rock-solid. I understand this. Thus, I'm happy to consider extensions for family emergencies, medical emergencies, and other serious unanticipated events. (Although certain assignments may come at very busy times in your semester, I am unlikely to grant any extension requested for this reason. In the normal course of events, students are expected to plan ahead and budget for the busiest times of the semester.) Only those extensions requested 36 hours or more before the specified due date can be considered. The length of extensions will be determined by the factors involved in your need for it. To request an extension, please message me on Webcourses and include any necessary documentation.

5) *Add/Drops.* UCF's policy will be explicitly followed. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of deadline dates for dropping, entering, and remaining in courses. Please consult UCF web materials for these details.

6) *Office Hour Policies.* Most of the time, you'll be able to drop by office hours whenever you want, no appointment required. In the week prior to the due-date of a paper, however, you'll need to notify me of your intention to come and request an appointment. These appointments will be doled out on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you cannot come to a scheduled session of office hours, we can try to devise a time that will work for both of us.

7) *In-Classroom Conduct – General.* Philosophy requires the discussion of controversial ideas. Everyone should feel comfortable voicing their reasoned assessments of these ideas. Therefore, it's essential that we maintain a respectful academic environment in the classroom. No derogatory or discriminatory speech acts will be permitted.

If you have any questions about what this entails, feel free to contact me. (Please also see section 10 below.)

8) *In-Classroom Conduct – Electronic Devices.* Since I want you to engage with the material through discussion and concentration on the lectures, use of laptops and smartphones during class is prohibited. (One exception: you can use your phone to check-in as present. See "Attendance/Participation" below.) Note-taking is indeed a good idea, but you should use paper and a writing utensil. Notes: 1) It's fine to keep your cellphone on with the ringer silenced. You just can't look at it. I recommend stowing it in your bag. 2) If you have a documented condition that conflicts with this policy, see "Accessibility Accommodation" below.)

9) *Accessibility and Accommodation.* The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need specific access in this course, such as accommodations, should contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss various access options. Students should also connect with [Student Accessibility Services](#) (Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable.

10) *Diversity and Inclusion.* The University of Central Florida considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be a strength and critical to its educational mission. UCF expects every member of the university community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture for all in its classrooms, work environments, and at campus events. Dimensions of diversity can include sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith and non-faith perspectives, socio-economic class, political ideology, education, primary language, family status, military experience, cognitive style, and communication style. The individual intersection of these experiences and characteristics must be valued in our community.

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at www.shield.ucf.edu and <http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible and/or contact Student Accessibility Services.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE - <http://oie.ucf.edu/> & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services - <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/> & sas@ucf.edu
- Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events – www.diversity.ucf.edu
- Student Bias Grievances – Just Knights response team - <http://jkrt.sdes.ucf.edu/>
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office - <http://compliance.ucf.edu/> & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- Ombuds Office - <http://www.ombuds.ucf.edu>

11) *Classroom safety.* Instructors and staff at UCF take classroom safety very seriously. In the event of an emergency, please follow all orders from the instructor (if the instructor is available to give orders). For a complete statement of UCF's emergency procedures, please visit our emergency preparedness site at <http://emergency.ucf.edu/>.

Grading

The grade will be determined by the percentage of possible points you earn on the various assignments (see below). The percentages correspond to letter grades as follows:

A grades

A: 93.33-100%

A-: 90-93.32

B grades

B+: 86.67-89.99

B: 83.33-86.66

B-: 80-83.32

C grades

C+: 76.67-79.99

C: 73.33-76.66

C-: 70-73.32

D grades

D+: 66.67-69.99

D: 63.33-66.66

D-: 60-63.32

F grades

>59.99

Late quizzes and examinations (without documented excuse) will suffer the following standardized penalties...

Submission 0-24 hours after due date: 10 percentage points

...24h1m-48 hours after due date: 20 percentage points.

...48h1m-72 hours after due date: 30 percentage points

(and so on)

Even if you've already missed a deadline so much that you will not receive any points on an assignment, you must complete the assignment to pass the course. See section 2 in "Course Policies" above.

Assignments

Attendance/Participation: 10% of the course grade. This portion of the grade will be determined by your course attendance and participation. You can earn all of the points in this portion of the grade by: a) attending all sessions for which your attendance is not excused; b) attending all but one sessions for which your attendance is not excused; or c) high attendance with absences compensated for by excellent participation. I will be taking attendance at all lectures through UCF's electronic system. A few minutes after the class begins, I will post a code that you can text to a designated number within a specified time-limit. You will be counted as present if you text the code to the designated number. (If you do not have a cell phone capable of text communication, please notify me and we will devise an alternative check-in means.)

I do want to give each student the opportunity to make up two unexcused absences. Making up such an absence requires some replacement work, including an in-person meeting during scheduled office hours or at another mutually-agreeable time. To indicate that you'd like to make up an unexcused absence and schedule the necessary meeting, please fill out the electronic unexcused absence form. (You can find the link to this form on the course management site.)

If you have an excused absence and notify me of the absence/excuse as soon as possible (in accordance with the "Excused Absences" policy above), then you will not automatically lose credit for the missed session. Nevertheless, each session of the class covers an entire week of material; thus, each absence constitutes a loss of exposure to quite a bit of material. As a result, you will be expected to complete some additional work to compensate for your absence. To compensate, you will have to write a reading report outlining the main points of all of the texts. You will also have to reserve time to come to my office hours to discuss any additional material from the PowerPoint slides.

Special Syllabus Quiz (3%). This small quiz, which just concerns some basic course information available in this syllabus, is due at the end of the first week of classes (Friday, Aug. 26, 5pm). You will receive full credit for the quiz if you score a 70% or higher, and you are permitted (even encouraged) to consult the syllabus while taking the quiz. This quiz is assigned in order to: a) give students incentive to familiarize themselves with the syllabus, and b) verify each student's "academic engagement" with the course, which enables any student due to receive financial aid for the course to receive that aid in a timely fashion.

IMPORTANT NOTE: You must complete this quiz before the due date, or receipt of your financial aid may be delayed.

Quizzes (4 quizzes; 37% of the course grade in total). Each of these quizzes will concern readings and lectures completed since the previous quiz. Three of the four quizzes will count towards your grade. Your lowest quiz grade will not be counted.

There are two ways to take each quiz: 1) attend class when the quiz is conducted; 2) receive an official excuse for your absence (i.e., an absence due to university business or medical emergency). Again, to obtain this excuse, please complete the Absence Form, which you can find in "Links to Administrative Forms" on the Canvas site.

Note: The following materials are required to take these four quizzes: 1) A #2 pencil; 2) An official raspberry-colored UCF Scantron form.

Midterm Exam (20% of the course grade). Questions on this closed-book, in-class exam will be in multiple formats. One week prior to this exam, I will be posting a practice exam on Canvas. The practice exam will not be as long as the in-class portion of the exam, but it should give you a taste of the sort of information that you'll be expected to retain, and thus help you study.

As with the quizzes, you are required to bring a #2 pencil and an official raspberry-colored UCF Scantron form.

Final Exam (30% of the course grade). Anything covered in the course is eligible for inclusion on the final exam. You'll receive much more information about the near the end of the course.

As with the quizzes and midterm, you are required to bring a #2 pencil and an official raspberry-colored UCF Scantron form.

Readings

All of the assigned readings for this course are located in one of two places. The first is the assigned textbook, *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 7th edition (eds. Perry, Bratman, and Fischer), which you should acquire at least for the duration of the course. The second is the course Canvas site. The section "Course Schedule" below indicates which sources contain which readings. If the source of a reading is *not* provided on the schedule, then that source is in our textbook. Otherwise, the source of the reading will be specified as "course reserve."

Although I try to keep variation in the per-session workload at a minimum, there is still some unevenness. You should thus plan ahead—see which weeks have the most/least reading, do the same with your other classes, and plan when you're going to read the assignments accordingly. Also, the readings vary in difficulty/density. Some of the shorter readings will nevertheless take you awhile to

complete, and will require you to spend more time thinking about them in order to determine what the author is trying to say. Thus you shouldn't automatically assume that "fewer pages" equals "easier/shorter assignment."

Course Schedule

(Note: Schedule is subject to change due to emergencies of various sorts [weather, health, personal, etc.]. I will clearly indicate any and all changes to the schedule as they are made.)

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	EVENT
Aug 21	Course Introduction	Review the syllabus	Take syllabus quiz ASAP; due Friday, Aug 25
Aug 23	<i>Introduction to the Introduction to Philosophy: What We Do around Here</i>	No readings assigned	
Aug 28	<i>The Philosophical Method in Action</i>	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (link on Webcourses)	
	Unit I: "What Can We Know?"		
Aug 30	<i>1.1 – The Nature and Possibility of Knowledge</i>	Plato, <i>Meno</i> (link on Webcourses)	NOTE: Classes end at 1pm on this date, so Class 81702 will not meet.
Sep 4		Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , I and II	
Sep 6		Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , II and III	Quiz 1
Sep 11		Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" (link on Canvas)	
Sep 13		Hume, "Skepticism with regard to the Senses"	
Sep 18	<i>1.2 – Metaphysics: The World Known</i>	1) Eddington, "The Two Tables" (link on Canvas) 2) <i>The Racecourse</i> and <i>The Arrow</i> (see the textbook)	
Sep 20	<i>1.3 – Philosophy of Mind: The Mind that Knows</i>	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , IV-VI	Quiz 2
Sep 25		Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"	Practice test available online
Sep 27		1) Armstrong, "The Nature of Mental States" 2) Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"	
Oct 2	<i>Midterm Examination</i>	Review for Midterm	Midterm Examination
	Unit II: "What Ought We Do?"		

Oct 4	2.1 – <i>Personal Identity: What is the Acting Thing?</i>	Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality,” Parts I and II	
Oct 9	2.2 – <i>Free Will and Responsibility: Am I Free to Choose What to Do?</i>	1) Hume, “Of Liberty and Necessity” 2) Van Inwagen, “The Powers of Rational Beings”	
Oct 11	2.3 – <i>Ethical Theories and Ethical Guidance, Pt. I: Utilitarianism</i>	Bentham, “The Principle of Utility”	
Oct 16		1) “Trolley Problem,” back of textbook 2) Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”	
Oct 18	2.4 – <i>Ethical Theories and Ethical Guidance, Pt. II: Kantianism</i>	Velleman, “A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics”	
Oct 23		Mappes, “Sexual Morality” [course reserve]	
Oct 25	2.5 – <i>Ethical Theories and Ethical Guidance, Pt. 3: Virtue Ethics</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (textbook selections)	
Oct 30		Wolf, “Moral Saints” (link on Canvas)	Quiz 3
Nov 1	2.6 – <i>Moral Skepticism: Is Anything Really Right or Wrong?</i>	Plato, <i>Republic</i> (textbook selections)	
Nov 6		1) Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” 2) Harman, “Ethics and Observation”	
	Unit III: What May I Hope For?		
Nov 8	3.1 – <i>Justice</i>	Mill, “The Subjection of Women”	
Nov 13		Rawls, “A Theory of Justice”	
Nov 15	3.2 – <i>God</i>	1) Anselm, “The Ontological Argument” 2) Aquinas, “The Existence of God”	
Nov 18		1) Leibniz, “God, Evil, and the Best of All Possible Worlds” 2) Pascal, “The Wager”	Quiz 4
Nov 20		1) Hume, “Dialogues concerning Natural Religion” [selections] 2) Russell, “Why I Am Not a Christian”	
Nov 22	3.3 – <i>Afterlife</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , selections [Canvas]	
Nov 27	No class. Eat well on Thanksgiving!		
Nov 29	An Attempt to Summarize	No readings assigned	Practice test available online
Thursday, Dec 6, 1-3:50 PM	<i>Final Examination</i> ■	Review for Exam	Final Examination

Course Bibliography

- Eddington, Arthur. 1994. "Two Tables." In *Reality*, 144-149. Indianapolis: Hackett.
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- Plato. 2015. *Meno*. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, edited by Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, and Seana Shiffrin. New York: Norton.
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- Quine, Willard Van Orman. 2008. "Epistemology Naturalized." In *Epistemology: The Big Questions*, edited by Linda Martin Alcoff, 2453-264. Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wolf, Susan. 1982. "Moral Saints". *Journal of Philosophy* 79 (8), 419-439.