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).

Course Evaluation

- Class attendance (by answers to clicker questions) 5%
- In-class clicker questions 10%
- In-class discussion sessions (preparation & participation) 10%
- Argument Paper (Due Thursday June 12) 25%
- Midterm Exam (Wednesday May 28) 20%
- Final Exam (Thursday June 19) 30%

Your week-one to-do list:

- Study this syllabus and bring any questions to class
- Buy the textbook and i>clicker, and bring both to class. You need to read the first section of the text before Tomorrow’s class. You need the clicker for Tuesday’s class.
- 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 Tuesday, read VW 51 (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.

A note about assigned readings

This course, like all philosophy courses, will involve a considerable amount of reading; and many of the readings 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 not prepared to read and study for about two hours or more for each class session, then this is perhaps not the course for you.

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 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 **Tuesday May 13**th (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 clicker to class and vote** on at least one question (so your clicker becomes associated with this course).
- **Register your clicker on-line** (so your clicker is associated with you) at [http://www.iclicker.com/registration](http://www.iclicker.com/registration). 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 clicker daily.

**Special instructions for i>clicker GO**

To create a i>clicker GO account, visit [https://iclickergo.com](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 your 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-A002.

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.

**Class attendance and participation**

You are expected to attend all classes. Bring your 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.

Note: you will also get a bonus attendance point for reading this syllabus. If you read this sentence and email or message me on webcourses with the subject or the first line being “PHI 2010: Syllabus points” you will earn a bonus attendance point.

Your attendance grade will be calculated by totaling the portion of the classes you attended, ignoring up to two absences (to allow for illness and other absences). Absences of more than two classes will negatively affect your participation grade. Only documented excuses that explain more than two absences will be accepted. No other explanations are expected.

**IMPORTANT**: bringing another student’s clicker to class and answering for them is a serious violation of academic integrity, equivalent to impersonating someone in an exam.

**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 worksheets**

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. **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.

Grades of up to 2 points per session will be based on preparation (completed worksheets) and on participation in the discussion. The point is that a lot of useful learning can happen during informed participation in discussions. Neither alone is sufficient.
You are expected to attend 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.

The worksheet must be completed BEFORE the class session. If you come to the discussion session without a completed worksheet, you will receive 0.5 points for participation only.

**Argument Paper**
A 1000 word paper arguing for a position on one of the issues we have covered in class (topic chosen in consultation with Dr. Cash)

**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 (someone with 69.75 should not necessarily get a C+, while another student with 70.0 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>50-59</th>
<th>60-69</th>
<th>70-85</th>
<th>85+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade:</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>C+</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 68.5, this does not necessarily mean that you were 0.5 points from earning a B-. The cutoff for B- might be as high as 73 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
- 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 at the end of the course
- putting some thought into your preparation for the in-class discussions, and occasionally contributing to your group’s discussions of the topic at hand.
- spending some time crafting and editing the draft of your paper. Taking peer-editor’s feedback and suggestions into account when editing the final draft.
- 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
- 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 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.
- spending some time crafting and editing several drafts of your paper. Taking peer-editor’s feedback and suggestions into account when editing the final draft. Talking about your paper topic with anyone you can get to listen. Having friends, roommates, parents and others read and ask questions about your draft, and taking their confusions, questions and objections as suggesting aspects to clarify and to better explain and defend your position.
- 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
- avoiding using the textbook site’s resources and the Question Bank to study for the final exam
- Spending little time crafting and editing your paper. Ignoring peer-editor’s feedback and suggestions, and submitting a paper that has changed little from your initial draft.
- 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. 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.