PHI 2010 Syllabus  
Summer/2015

Instructor Contact

- Instructor: William Butchard, Ph.D.
- Office: PSY 229
- Office Hours: Online correspondence
- 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: Summer 2015
- Location: Online

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 Text


2. Supplemental readings I will make available in Canvas

Course Requirements

You can earn a total of **100 percentage points** in the course. Each course requirement is worth a certain number of points. The distribution of points is as follows:

- Weekly Reading Quizzes
- Weekly Small-group Discussions.
- Weekly Whole-class discussions
- Term Paper

Course Scheduling

Every week has the same schedule:

- **Thursday and Friday are reading days. Start reading on these days. You cannot possibly digest all of the material if you wait until Monday.** Also, in the course Modules, you will find an overview of each reading. These will help you keep perspective as you read the selections, which are quite difficult, so take them seriously and be sure to keep them in mind as you read.
• **Reading quizzes are always due on Monday by 11:59 PM.** They are open-book quizzes, but it is very important that you not try to complete the quizzes as you are reading a selection for the first time. That approach is anxiety inducing and you will not have time to do well.

• Small group discussions have two parts. **The first part is always due on Tuesday by 11:59 PM, and second part is always due by Wednesday by 11:59 PM.** You are expected to have a meaningful (i.e., sincere and contentful) dialogue with your small group in response to the prompt. Expressions of agreement, disagreement, or praise are insufficient (though not inappropriate).

• **Whole-class discussion posts are always due on Thursday by 11:59 PM.** You are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the class dialogue in response the prompt. You should not wait until Thursday to contribute.

**The first week is the exception.** There is a syllabus quiz due on Friday, July 3rd, by 11:59 PM. There is assigned reading for Thursday and Friday. Week 2 will follow the scheduling outline above and the assignments that week will be based on the readings assigned during the first week.

The term paper will be due in the last week of the semester. There will be a pre-writing exercise to help you get started. Your task will be to develop a criticism of an argument found in one of the reading selections. The paper will be 500 words in length. I do use Turnitin to check for plagiarism.

**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. **All due dates are specified in Eastern Time, so if you are not in this time zone it your responsibility to compensate for the time difference.**

Since this is an online course, you need to have a well-functioning computer and decent internet. The weekly quizzes cannot be retaken if you have an electronic issue in the middle of one and as a result cannot complete the quiz. This rarely happens, but because of the possibility, **your two lowest quizzes will be dropped.** If you find yourself having connection problems, it is best to take care of it right away instead of dropping two grades and hoping it doesn't happen again.

**Evaluation and Grading**
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 92 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73 – 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63 – 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are four types of assignments for you to complete. Each category of assignment is worth a percentage of your final grade:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Reading Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group Discussions</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class Discussions</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attendance and Participation**

There is no class to attend, since this is an online course. However, punctuality, participation, and civility still apply. I strongly encourage you to be a full participant in the class discussions. Don’t worry about getting something wrong. If something is unclear to you, it is probably unclear to several other people, 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. Always remember to be civil towards people who have different beliefs from yours.

**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.

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: Go to Webcourses/Canvas and find the “Syllabus Quiz” for this course and complete the 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. **Free Will**
   - Harry Frankfurt: Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility
   - Roderick M. Chisholm: Human Freedom and the Self

2. **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

3. **Knowledge and Skepticism**
   - G.E. Moore: Proof of an External world
   - David Lewis: Elusive knowledge
   - Jonathan Vogel: Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the best explanation (e)

4. **Mind and Matter**
   - John Searle: Can Computers Think?
   - Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia
   - Paul Churchland: Jackson’s Knowledge Argument

5. **Right and Wrong**
   - John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism
   - Immanuel Kant: Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals